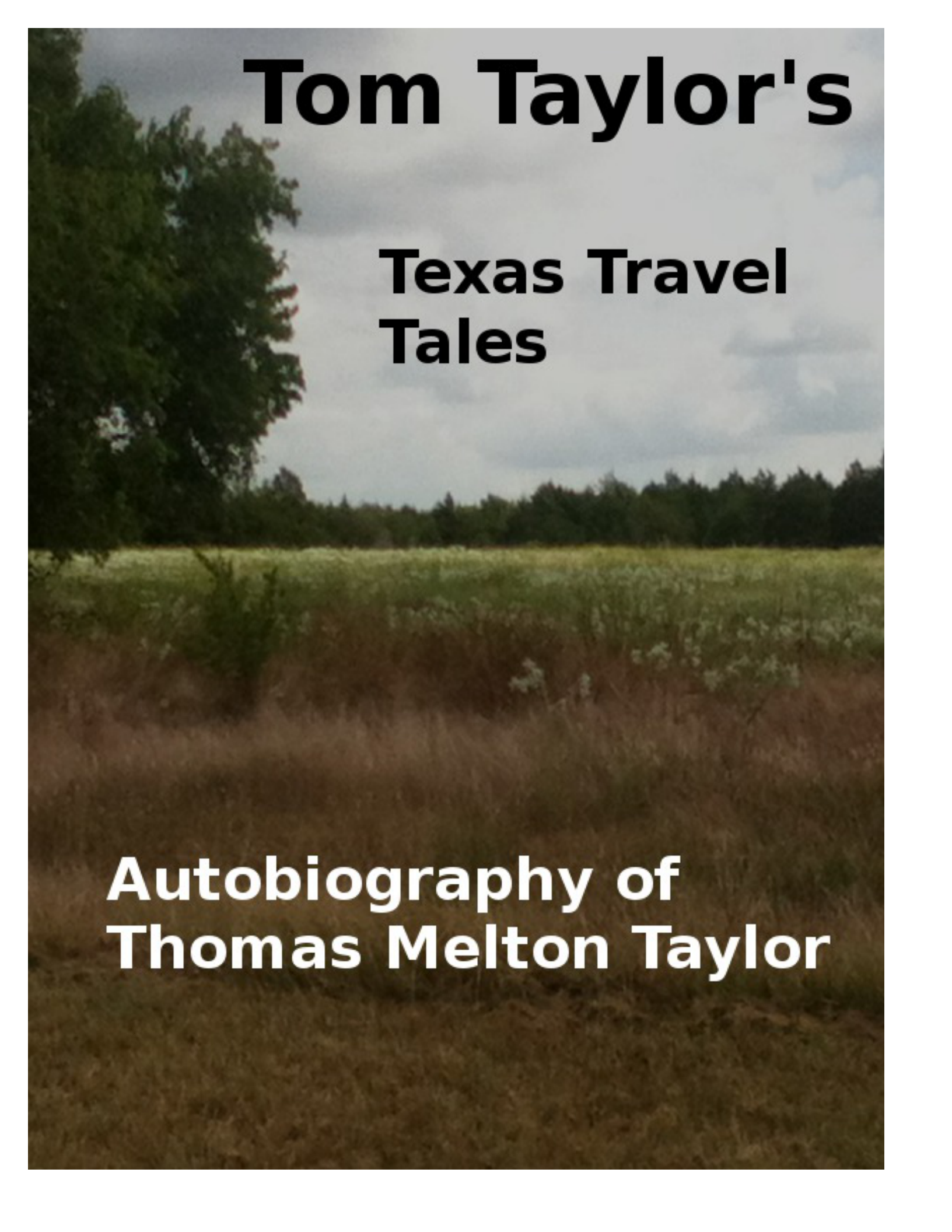


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a rural landscape. On the left side, there is a large, dark green tree with some reddish-brown flowers or leaves. The middle ground is a field of tall, dry, brownish grass with some green weeds. In the distance, there is a line of trees under a cloudy, overcast sky.

Tom Taylor's

Texas Travel Tales

**Autobiography of
Thomas Melton Taylor**

Tom Taylor's

George Washington Taylor

Texas Travel Tales

Autobiography

by

Thomas Melton Taylor

**Transcribed for The Taylor Winniford Archive Project
This document is in the public domain.**



T. M. Taylor
3322 Montebello
Tepic, Jalisco, Mexico 25543

TOM TAYLOR's TEXAS TRAVEL TALES

Texas is a traveler's paradise, or as us bushy tailed smarty pants good ole boys say, a traveling garden of Eden with action on the constant go like a wild zany party of great story tellers state of mind seeking the unknown grandeur of the great promised land. The distant Texas state borders provide enough wide open spaces and dozens of crowded cities teeming with urbane life to fit all persuasions of folks. We long winded Texas folks go everywhere just to take a fast look for the sheer fun of it all, to see exactly what kind of wild curiosity the Texas good life has to offer—need no rhyme or real reason to get a little traveling noise into our topnotch Texanized lives. I can travel eight hundred and fifty miles across the east to west terrain and then traverse that far north to south before even getting half-way tired of the good ole messing around the Texas God-made fun sights, doing all this faster than you can say Jack Robinson at that. A prodding Texan not wanting to see more Texas countryside, rural or citified, is scarce as hen's teeth, let me tell you. We true-blue Texans put our big loud mouthed bill into the great expanse of all wandering things Texas. We roaming Texans can find our lucky selves wherever we go into the big universe known as friendly Tejas blue skies. My genial Texas ranged homeland contains more varied landscape scenic contrasts than any rambunctious Texan can experience it all in just one regular lifetime, even one like me, going high onto 82 years of journeying all through this great slap-happy state of mine. Texas is thus just too large or unlimited to understand completely in one long lifetime; I should know after walking so daring all over every square foot of the pristine Texas soil to go see for myself from time memorial when I was a mere lad of a boy till now as a current full-grown senior citizen sojourning into my best decade of life yet. So, my present rambling bunkum is rather to be expected with my twenty-twenty good-times hindsight. And excuse me for living if I should ever lie—I just fell out of the hearse on the way to tell you all the blundering trifles of my passing foolhardy ways. I just naturally get vocal like this accidentally-on-purpose. If you don't believe every word I say as gospel Texan truth or high toned idle chattering, then don't say I didn't warn you about going with me through the land of Texas malarkey. Skeptic souls of my traipsing all over hell's half acre and then some just nearly ain't truly Texas bred enough to know the difference to expect such gad-about bunkum. But then if you don't know no better than to go prowling along with me for the mere hellacious fun of it all in my straying nomadic state of mind, so be it, to hold your peace of mind and stay home to be bored stiff. I would never bore you with a dull story, for I had rather bore you with a wild funny one!

Fun is the name of the game for good jaunty Texas jovial every day living. And Texas fun times get in your blue tromping veins like a life-giving blood plasma jogging transfusion. Genuine old-fashioned Texas brand of fun is just what the out-going doctor ordered or what us good ole naturally glad-happy boys enjoy, and all my rollicking joy surely is far better for you than a stuffed shirt pompous arse attitude so come frolic with me to shoot the hot breeze and break bread along the way. Eating barbecue banquet style and telling wild tales are the "El Game-o" Texas chic rage timeout from serious dullardness as our Tex-Mex fooling around motto down here in rebel land dictates the good sporting life is always lived fully. Texans are always funning it up in the middle of everything at odd times and that's no big liar's tale either, or my name is mud. Texas is in the middle of things, evenly geographically centered in the mid-continent of the Third Coast area on the hot Gulf of Mexico. And us lively Texans ourselves are thusly slap-dab in the great centerpiece pace setter showplace of the whole western hemisphere where more original varieties of primal flora and native born Texan fauna good stuff flourish than anywhere else on God's green earth.

Why, no where else does so much one-of-a-kind growing things proliferate full of local color tall tales told into mythical proportions such as the horsing around cowboy rodeo performer or oilman wheeler-dealer and NASA spaceman odyssey.

TAYLOR 1a/1a/1a/1a

Texas is thusly larger than all outdoors that can't hold it, reaching upward always beyond the stars and consequently there's very little room inside any real-live Texan's attitude for small minded things bound solely to flat head dullards with their fuss-budget badmouthing ill manners. We Texans are just too high-spirited of a stormy rowdy soul to live quietly boring and that makes us Texas folks a breath of fresh air in a stuffy lifestyle, even when at home on a hot breezy desert Padre Island beach when it comes time to pay the piper for our funning ways. Just put on your hip boots and wade through this narration with me in my fun-loving Texas style gesturing. We Texans are always in the bull's eye focal point of pulling pranks of funning romping antics on each other; practical jokes are our mainstay, for at a moment's notice we are off to the races pell-mell of running-for-the-wild-roses stir crazy good times as any butt-cut Texan will tell you or gladly put-one-over-on-you, so ask me no questions and I will tell you no lies about all my no-nonsense rubbish monkey-shines sauntering through my long time native-Texan personal experiences.

The Texan way is too boisterous for a normal person to appreciate in just one mere lifespan. Or can anyone ever calm down to being the same down-to-earth personal lifestyle after experiencing the woolly-bear Texan raw-hiding brand of fun. And no real-live Texan can ever stop talking about the bigger-than-life Texas scene or even resist the chance like myself now to spin fanciful yarns about the old-timey Texas mystique or tall tale origins. So, now, let me tell you the unadulterated truth about Texas origins and its legendary people. Even God himself is an original true-blue Texan because He of course created the whole **big land** of wonderment named Texas with a little bit of the whole universe put into our heavenly borders of Texas just to **showcase** the contrasts of what life has to offer the truly great inquisitive Texanized souls of this world. God just naturally had a divine sense of humor to share when he made holy Texas so religiously big; the Lord Almighty wanted a celestial-sized retreat to get away from the deified tedium of heavenly desires so he just fashioned a land of vastness called Tejas or ole friendly Texas as his last really great resort (Mother Nature is the Lord's own true handmaiden or helpmate in making Texas what it really is today as one of their better world efforts but then that is another holy terror wild tale for later telling). The everlasting God himself could almost get lost or misdirected in a turn-around bumfuzzled labyrinth of wild trails and endless roads not yet taken in some immense parts of Texas: the piney woods of deep East Texas are enough of a gigantic Big Thicket forest to wander almost forever in a limber lost maze; the extreme North Texas terrain has more little rivers and shallow creeks than any deified arch-angel hunter can ever find his way back on the same path he went or can shake a big stick at; the Central Texas flat plains landscape are big enough to hold the rest of the whole world; the windswept West Texas parched desert lands are a little bit of Egypt's endless hellacious sand dunes or nearly hot enough to be hades itself—even the devil "hissself" ain't never got his fill of West Texas dusty characters; and the semi-tropical Valley of South Texas is exotic enough to capture the amazon imagination of any story teller like myself full of those ruby-red bittersweet-to-sour grapefruits grown no place else.

The whole world wants to come see Texas because there is no place else just like it. And the infamous Texas brag has made this place called Texas so all-fired inscrutable and improbable to the befuddled foreigners who occupy the rest of the great United States territory that was once all part of the vast boundaries of the Republic of Texas. The best all-fired-up PR press for Texas is the people themselves. Texans are just naturally going to talk ever so glowingly about Texas wherever they are; we are always advertising our home-place like a laying chicken hen that flies-off the nest so loudly cackling about the big egg just laid so you can surely see that Texans give no never

TAYLOR 2/2/2/2

mind to being laughed-at for having the proverbial egg on our smiling face when we put it all there intentionally in the first place to get fame for our big mental state just for the grins of it. Our last laugh is the best laugh. Thus, everyone can hardly wait to get-in on the noisy Texas brand of fun or at least come see what all the ruckus is about. Texans are like a proud but loud cackling fowl friendlyshow-off hawking our great big laid egg (why, fish lay thousands of eggs at one time and never say word-one so just how many folks do you know are eager to eat fish eggs each morning for breakfast fare? Hen eggs are thusly the worldly rage like Texas simply because of loud cackling about a mighty good thing). So, now, you should understand why I am like the cock-of-the-walk crowing about everything Texas. Some people think I am joking but you should know better by now that I am serious as a judge on election day when a Duval County ballot box is over-stuffed for my benefit, at that. But I can cackle and chuckle all day long about the great estate of Texas. The only reason that I do stop cackling about Texas late at night is not that I am tired of Texas but because I get to go to sleep and then dream about my most favorite state of being. Being tired-to-death in a great dream state is nearly as good as being wide awake in Texas during a tornado wind storm.

Until you been in a Texas tornado, you just ain't never really lived. I have experienced first hand more than my share of fast moving tornadoes. When I was a mere lad of a boy I used to could outrun a Texas tornado real easy. I just ran in zig zag angles and confused the dickens out of that dust devil of a Texas wind storm. Man, was I ever good at doing that kind of brain storming funning around. I could lost a wind storm funnel cloud in no time flat at all; sometimes I could not see a thing myself for all the darkness around me from the dust kicking-up from my own heels. Now, I as an old man just sit around and wait for the Texas tornado to come to me to do its own thing. I don't rightly have the energy no more like I used to. The national weather service now warns us so far in advance that I just go to the local shelter when the wind blows hard; actually, I still have my very own storm cellar left over from the good old days of nearly being scared to death by a Texas tornado.

The old folks in my family long ago used to go rushing into the storm cellar, running there, when the least little ole black looking cloud formed in the blue sky. That's really what got me to running so much in the first place. I was actually running away from being closed-up in a cramped hole in the damp ground commonly called a storm cellar. I would run like the dickens in the great open outdoors away from the family imprisoned grotto. I would as a half grown boy run to see if it was actually a full-bloomed Texas tornado or just merely a black smokescreen of rain clouds about to pour-down much needed water on the parched earth. And being young and foolish, I would run up very close to have a fast look before turning tail to run like all get-out to escape the wrath of one of those terrorizing Texas tornadoes. A funnel cloud is such a fright sight to behold anyway; it looks like it will go at just about any angle since it is so crooked running itself. But a tornado is an odd yet very big beautiful sight to see in the far distance traveling like crazy from the south-east corner of the big dark storm cloud in a seemingly straight line for a quarter of a mile as it turns across the Texas countryside. It runs a good fast race. And you got another think coming if you believe you can really out-fox a Texas tornado. It is funnier than a wild barrel of scared monkeys at a crazy zoo; you just can't out-thunk anyone of them Texas tornadoes, and I also just ain't funning you up a bit about having a good wild Texas fun time in a Texas storm. You just ain't never had no real fun till you been in a Texas tornado. We is all in this big Texas tornado alley together and had better get used to

the idea of running for our lives as a common experience all over this great big state of hellacious stormy fun when a Blue Norther sweeps down on us so suddenly, with its mix of hot and cold air to make a funnel cloud cyclone.

Texas is full of more funny varied experiences just a'waiting to happen than anywhere else in all the world. We Texans got more unused terrain than you can shake a stick at. The whole landscape is just waiting for someone to happen along for the fun of it all on this great real estate bust of Texas land. And Texans are just not one race of folks to sit around to wait a long time for something to start happening; we go outdoors and do something about it—we do it even if it is wrong. But a real Texan can't do nothing really wrong. Doing nothing real well is my speciality so I should know. But the only thing wrong with doing nothing all day is that you never know when you are finished! The less I do, the better I am at it. I can finish nothing real fast.

Yet I can finish-up doing nothing better than anyone else in the state of Texas. I can june-around real fast doing nothing all the time. I learned all this kind of work-brittle eagerness early in my life from old timey family relatives. My folks came to Texas with the very first settlers as a big family group in a wagon train so we started out early being a good true-blue Texan with the original Texians or Texicans as they called themselves humorously way back then. I got more generations of ornery Texans behind my family tree than I care to mention or even can shake a stick at; they is all deep inside me right now like a giant gene pool swimming around my innards or else I am just like they are, if you can figure out what I just intended to say.

Tis no telling to what lengths of fun a good true-blue Texan will go to; I should know as much and better about having good clean fun. But don't do as I do, just do as I say, to quote an old uncle of mine who preached this brand of perverse philosophy just like all the big time preachers still do on the radio/TV machines; my preacher man uncle could get down to the basics of being a holy-roller good book believer with the best of them. Well, I learned my daily good-book lessons so easy by watching all my relatives have a good time funning one another up one side of Texas real estate and down the other side of their laughing state of malarkey. One of my most unusual kinsmen was an uncle from Scotland. He was actually a great-great-uncle, and he was old—I do mean he was old by any standards and did he ever look it. His face was so wrinkled that it looked like a roadmap to eternal old age. My uncle was older than any gold digging thing in the whole big universe. But the old man came to the New World as he called this land of Texas from Aberdeen, Scotland to see the infamous big Tejas. And he wanted to see it all, mind you, every square foot.

You see, the old Scotsman was rich enough to do anything in the world he wanted to do. He was so wealthy, even by stingy Scottish standards, that no one living would dare dispute his fortune as being big because he spent so little of it; it seemed odd that the less the man spent the more everyone said he had—he was one old man who spent nothing at all and that made folks say or repute that he was a really big rich man. Old Unc did not spend a penny for having fun yet he had a big reputation for being really rich like a big spender would have as a fabulous Broadway-Joe image in New York City if he had spent a million dollars just to prove he was a millionaire. My Uncle Scotty as we called him said that spending a million dollars to prove you were a millionaire would only help bankrupt him or send him to the poor house, so

being frugal was his plan. Lordy, was that old Scotsman ever frugal. He could out-frugal anybody with his old timey Scotch ways. But I did just happen to see his bank deposit slip once that transferred more than enough funds to bank-roll any wheeler-dealer Texas sized investment. Tis a marvel that a Texas size bank robbery didn't happen right then and there in the bank lobby when my old Unc presented his letter of credit. But then Jesse James was already caught and long dead or we would have had cause for worry. The money was not to be spent for any casual things like food or shelter; the funds were to be made available only in case the old Scotsman found a deal that was just too good to pass-up. That ole Scotsman was always prepared for the moment, whatever it was going to be or lead to.

I even made elaborate preparations myself to show my grand-uncle Scotty all over the heartland of the great state of Texana. I got train and bus schedules to all points of Texas from our place—surely was a good thing that I did not purchase tickets ahead of time to those parts. That would have been money wasted down the drain or out the window so to speak. That old stingy-gut Scotsman was serious as a judge about seeing all of Texas first hand but for free! He wanted to walk, not just to save money, he said, but to be able to see everything at close scrutiny. And we scrutinized deep into the heart of Texas, I can assure you. We indeed saw Texas up very close every step of the way—lordy mercy, did we ever see every foot of Texana soil! Old Unc Scotty was committed to this long walk throughout Texas; the more we walked, the more committed he was to continue saving his travel money (and let me tell you, I wanted him committed to Terrell insane asylum when we finally got that far). I was a typical young whippersnapper back then and would waste more energy doing nothing than wanting to enjoy going on a long walk through Texas.

Was I ever good at walking? But I was much better at running. Of course, I was a lot younger back then and did not really mind showing my old Unc around the big real estate of Texas; I was getting out of work while doing all this good deed stuff of walking on a hospitality trip—remember, I was also pretty good at doing nothing much at all. Well, I just figured that the old Scotsman would soon tire of his travels on foot long before I could become exhausted. Wow, was I ever wrong about that old stingy mossback man getting tired; he could walk circles around any foot race that I ever saw or won. Unc Scotty could certainly walk all over you long before you could even get started good. All this walking or going aroving to see Texas soil first hand began way back in 1914 when I was only fourteen years old, just barely past my birthday on April 17th. I was big for my age and looked older than I actually was so I really was a worldly experienced looking man-about-town when I finally turned twenty-one in 1921 on April 17.

My old Unc was so old that he no longer celebrated birthdays; it cost too much, he said, to indulge an expensive useless habit just to keep bad memories alive. And besides, he was too busy seeing the New World of Texas to stop and remind himself that he had come over on the ark with Noah. My old uncle walked using a cane; he could do more different things with that old cane than you would think possible. My unc would use the hook on the handle to catch the attention in a big restaurant when he would ask for a free glass of water and then not buy a dime's worth of food. The old Scotsman did not intend to return to eat there so he did not waste hard cash on tips or non-essentials as he called it. Thus, the big time restaurants in "Little New York City acting"

Dallas did not cater to my Uncle Scotty's stingy ways very well. The folks over at Terrell insane asylum just naturally assumed that I was taking the eccentric old man to the mental hospital but just a few miles down the road in Big D township the folks were a whole 'nother world there. The Dallisites were ready to ride him out of town on a rail so to speak for not buying an expensive entree, so we got out of there fast, when his refusal to tip met such heated opposition and open hostility from those high stepping fancy waiters.

We then walked to Fort Worth where the rivalry between Dallas bordered on the truly insane. Signs were everywhere stating, "Go to Dallas for your entertainment but stay in Ft. Worth for fun." We stayed in Fort Worth till old Unc got tired of smelling all the cow stench; the cow town stock yards fascinated the old man. He even earned extra money to pay all of our expenses by punching cows with his long cane; that old man would poke them in the rump like an electric cattle prod to make them hustle down the corral to their manifest destiny as he called it ever so politely; he had a loud rebel yelp that the cows were afraid of (that old man would have been a great Indian frontier fighter or good Confederate sniper soldier back in the good old days). But we did not have the good old days back in my day; we just had **rinky-dink** high riding times. Fort Worth also had a big slogan sign that proclaimed, "The Gateway to the West." And the desert terrain certainly was convincing of that deserted fact.

The flat desert plains appealed to my Uncle Scotty. He had never seen anything so endless and sparkling in the bright sunlight. Never before had he realized that so much nothing could go on so long and so far. We felt like we could see forever and then some. No trees and no shade either. We walked through the endless boiling oven-heat of this West Texas land space. My old unc did not seem to mind the hot winds; he had changed into his kilts with the family colors of course. The constant whiff of wind at 18 miles per hour just whipped a breeze up his coat tail as I called it; he had a big smile on his face all the time, big as a wave on a slop bucket. But trouble did come our way. Life did indeed exist on the vast desert after all. The cactus and yucca plants contained a vertible jungle of life beneath them.

A tall West Texas cactus near us had the biggest rattle snake in the world residing there. That coiled snake hissed and rattled its 40 foot tail at us like long lost old friends or so my old unc said. But I assured him that the rattle snake was deadly and was also fit to eat, once killed. (I was an authority on poisonous snakes because I had once been bitten and my right leg turned all striped like the venom in the dangerous snake nearby, plus I would puke my head off when a whiff of the snake's breath came my way—needless, to say that I was doing my thing, getting all striped looking and throwing-up like a giant geyser). Well, the old man took his trusty cane and used it like a fancy sword or carving knife. Unc defanged that old snake first, so fast, that the varment did not know what was happening; that snake was dead long before it knew it. My uncle was not a man to waste a thing so he used the long skin to make a thousand belts to sell; the flesh or meat was then roasted over our camp fire; the defanged snake meat tasted a lot like chicken. We were pert-near starved to death, so good and hungry, that I could have eaten a horse right there on the spot. Rattle snake meat is good eating if you don't know what it is. We ate our fill and pecked the rest for future meals that might not be so easy to find later. We continued our long walk westward. We walked along so many old dusty trails and through so many dust devil wind storms that I thought I was going to turn into a grain of sand. I never saw so much endless dusty trails in all my life. I couldn't image that we would ever get through

it all in one lifetime. The dust storms were so bad that I thought my eyes would mud over and bog down, right there in some remote mesa, never to see anything pretty good looking again.

I had already seen all that I wanted to see of this plains country when my old uncle stopped to rest. The old man leaned up against his old stiletto cane. The noon day sun was beating down on us like a blast furnace going full force. Uncle Scotty commented that the sun or God's time was twelve noon so he decided to double check his old gold watch with the Great Maker's own natural timepiece at high noon desert time. Well, the two were in perfect harmony of complete sync as usual. But my old uncle began to jump around like he had ants in his pants or was doing the Saint Vitus's dance with a scorpion up his kilts. I did not know that the old man could move so fast. Old unc then used his scimitar cane as a digging machine; he twitched and dug with fervor that seemed beyond such an old man's ability. I even thought a permanent nervous disorder was upon him like the chorea disease had claimed him for sure. His spasmodic movements however were not uncoordinated. The old man knew well what he was doing; he was very well indeed in command of his saber toothed faculties. He had just inadvertently dropped a penny in the hot desert sand. You would have thought he had lost a huge fortune that was fast sinking beneath his feet. The old man jumped and hopped and dug like crazy over his accidental loss. You would have thought he could well afford to lose a penny with his being so rich. But he was stingier than any Jew; he could out-jew a Jew on stretching a penny till it was flatter than a flap-jack pancake. My uncle was a real stingy-gut man. That uncle of mine was so tight that he squeaked quarters when he walked. That lost penny in the hot sand was like a huge forfeited legacy, suddenly being dispossessed by Lady Luck herself. A penny in cash was big spending money to my old uncle, his being truly Scots and richer than old King Midas even. Well, that old man dug till he found that lost penny. Yes, I even had to help; and I did feel sorry for the pitiful old man. We dug till late spring time. Day and night we dug; that trusty versatile rapier walking-cane of my uncle's worked better than a new bulldozer ever could. The dirt piled high and now forms the edge of the West Texas Davis Mountains. The deep hole is called Palo Duro Canyon and the far side of the huge ditch my old uncle dug is now named Grand Canyon. Thus, my old Unc gave this country some mighty great landmarks while he was retrieving his lost penny so I do guess we got our penny's worth of scenic beauty out of all our hard work.

Finding that lost penny was typical of my old uncle, though. He never gave-up till he finished what he had started to do. We were so tired and exhausted after all that hard grave digging work that we decided to rest a long time before seeing the vast remainder of Texas. But we did not stand still while discussing the idea of resting; our family members never let grass grow under our feet. We always walked and talked at the same time while making our next plans, strolling the great outdoors of Texas. We had finally reached a place named Marfa when we decided to rest a long time. We were still walking on a major highway from old Mexico to Alpine. Old Unc decided a restaurant would be just the thing to open; we could serve rattle snake steaks. The snake were free, just for the taking or killing. All the local ranchers wanted the snakes caught and some even brought sack fulls to us—big rattle snake round-ups were soon started just for our benefit. The rattlesnake steak restaurant was a 24-hour eatery and the slogan sign stated, "We Never Close." A Chinaman owned a cafe across the road from us and his own marquee front billboard sign read, "Me Wakey, Too." My old Scottish uncle decided to be a real Texan himself by now so he built the largest and best restaurant in the world way out in the middle of nowhere.

This biggest eating place in the world was so large that the waiters were on roller skates. The head waiter rode a motorcycle just to check on all the waiters, who were always out on the main dining room floor. And one Sunday, my uncle decided to stop serving long enough to turn thanks at the noon meal; his devout Presbyterian Calvinism required that reverent pause so he asked Reverend Smith to pray and mind you over five-thousand reverend Smiths stood up to turn thanks. That's how large the restaurant was. And tips of course provided the most of their pay. Getting food prepared was no easy task in this largest of eatery; tons of potatoes had to be mashed like grapes—the waiters had to take a bath and then get into the vats to mash them up. And to grease the cooking range for breakfast, the waiters tied thick meat rind skins on their feet to oil down a freshly cleaned grill by skating across the top like ice on a pond. We had a full house all the time; the major highways to Alpine and to Presidio kept constant traffic coming our way on the desolate desert. Folks also drove to California this way; Highway 67 from Dallas came through, that's how we had walked that far to this God forsaken place. Famous people though ate at our place; the infamous legendary Paul Bunyan and his Babe-the-blue-ox even came; the ox however fell into our back yard fifty-foot deep cistern on a Sunday morning. That oxen was indeed about to die or so I thought even on the Lord's Day so I jumped in anyway—the ox was truly in the proverbial ditch so I began desperate means to save that legended animal. I milked that ox till we both floated to the top of the cistern on the heavy cream. But Babe-the-blue-ox swam so fast that all the good fresh sweet milk got churned around into curds and whey until the thick cream rose to turn into butter and butter-milk. But even all that butter only lasted half-way through the breakfast hour on our delicious pancakes. The milk did not even last half that much time into the rush hour. We fed people by the dozens; word of mouth got around even South of the border that we had the best food in the world. The snake steaks were our speciality or drawing card. We used the fangs from the deadly snakes to make ivory buttons and doo-dad whatnots to sell. My old Scottish uncle even built a button factory so as not to waste a thing that could make a dollar. The button factory soon earned more money than the cafe. We had to be careful with the snake fang buttons or they would bite you when on the shirts that were too tight, but my old unc said that was only from being pinched by a too small shirt size. My old uncle soon sold out; he wanted to see the rest of Texas and thus could not operate a lucrative eatery since he still had the wanderlust. Besides, old unc was concerned about the famous Marfa lights; he just knew that some outer-space Marfalutations were lurking nearby. And old Unc did not want to get taken-in by them UFO's. The restaurant business might someday be hurt if local folks feared that some science fiction supernatural thing was connected to those strange balls of fire floating through the West Texas static electrified night air.

Old Unc luckily sold to an Irishman who must have been right off the boat. The immigrant somehow made good Irish whiskey out of potatoes—the luck of the Irish must have been with him. Uncle Scotty told the Irishman, or Arushmun as my unc said the word Irishman, that the Marfa lights were only swamp gas reflections of lanterns being used by little leprechauns hiding their gold in the hills. That quickly sold the Irishman or old Arushmun on buying the restaurant for sure near hidden gold that could be searched-for when he was not busy frying snake steaks. We all left happy as a clam.

My old Uncle made a fortune on the cafe sale alone, but we still had to continue our voyage, walking, to see Texas first hand and mainly to save the

money. We strolled to Del Rio and had the time of our lives. Old Unc spoke his Scotch dialect on them Mexicans so their Tex-Mex lingo did not work to confuse him like most other tourists reacted; he confused the hellaciousness out of them instead. They could not beg a cent out of him either of course. All the professional Mexican beggars finally paid old Unc to leave their small territorial corner and thus not infringe on their gig. Thus, I learned a free lesson well on how to out-panhandle the best of them from my old Scottish uncle.

We then panhandled our way through Mexicali country as old Unc called this part of Texas. The road sights never ceased to amuse the old Scotsman. The horned toads amused the old man to no end; he called them horny toads and from the looks of their numbers he was not far wrong—their population kept growing by leaps and bounds wherever we went! The long hot dry walk to Eagle Pass saw lots of horny toads doing their thing on each other in public at that. But the spiders posed the biggest problem or threat. Those hairy things just came a hopping along and over fences like jack rabbits on wheels. I was scared of them of course. Well, the biggest tarantulas were nearly as big as horses, as I best do remember now. That old trusty stylet of a walking cane of my uncle's surely did come in handy once more; he threw it like a spear into the heart or solar plexus area of those spiders—that javelin cane did the trick as a good harpoon more than once, too. Tarantulas are a normal thing in West Texas and onward down through the Southwestern area of the state, but those huge hairy arachnoids are one spider story that I will never forget, or want to repeat as a mind boggling experience.

My old uncle killed every big spider he saw with his sharp ax cane blade; he retrieved the sword cane after every kill. We never ate any spiders, though. All the exotic chocolate covered ants and caterpillar insects today would have been an inspired hay-day money-maker thing for my Scotch uncle to earn another Texas sized fortune off roasting those creepy creatures. But those West Texas jack rabbits as old Unc called those spiders were too cumbersome to individually market—only stews or soups would best serve-up those critters. We then walked along in peace and quietude after old Unc had killed a few dozen of those arachnoids; word must have gotten out that they were very valuable since the old Scotsman was hunting them down for money so other folks started killing them to get in on the act, or else the spiders themselves fled for their very life—critters can talk to each other in their own lingo so they learn to pass the word along when their numbers keep disappearing.

My old uncle and me walked eagerly toward the rest of Texas. We finally walked the streets of Laredo. Old Unc still expected gunmen and wild shootouts like in the frontier days. But all we saw and encountered was more Tex-Mex and the Scotch lingo that made the local natives regard us as strange hombres not to mess with. I wanted to start another restaurant in Laredo but old Unc said that Laredo was the kind of town to die in, not a place to live a long life. And he was not ready to die before seeing all of Texas first hand by walking through the local lore.

We then hiked on down to McAllen and to Brownsville. The valley fruit trees was like the garden of Eden to my old uncle. He said that this was the best spot this side of heaven or maybe even heaven on earth itself. Surely, the Lord God Almighty himself was living permanently somewhere close in this great valley. Now, my old uncle was getting ready to buy huge orchards in the semi-tropical Texas citrus Valley. The old man was even talking about sinking

TAYLOR 9/9/9/9

his whole fortune into Texas Valley fruit trees, especially the ruby red grapefruits. My uncle had finally found his home away from home in deep South Texas. My old Unc had gone ape over the whole Texas Valley. He was like King Kong all over his Alice Faye delicious fruits, climbing his Texas Valley tree of an Empire State Building. The old man was about to invest every cent he had in the Valley citrus scheming dream of his long life; I told him that the Texas sun had fried his brains at long last from all that walking in the hot Texan desert plains and that he should wait till he saw all of Texas before he started buying property as a permanent place to live forevermore—Texas was just too good of a thing all over to find one spot to live forever and ever. Old Unc thought that I was smart after all, wise beyond my tender years, for a kid as he still regarded me. But I was getting older by the minute with all our legendary Texas sized encounters happening on this long hot walk through Texas. Now, I just wanted to get on with my travels. We had already been long enough on our walk through the great Texas real estate and old timey folklore as it was for me.

We next ambled upward to Kingsville; the million acre King Ranch did not impress the old man very much at all. He owned a lot of land himself back in Scotland and was a baron of vast sorts over his own Highlands Valley in the Mother Country as he called home there. Uncle Scotty did not want to see more of the same old thing in the new world as he still kept calling Texas. We kept seeing more armadillos than you could shake a stick at; old Unc at first sight thought they were the surviving relic children of the prehistoric monsters or were left-over ancient Texinites as he liked to call them germ carriers of the dreaded leprosy bacteria. My old Uncle Scotty's nimble dagger cane again came in handy as a bayonet to kill a nearby armadillo but we wisely resisted the temptation of cooking them into a casserole because of their germy meat. But old Unc liked to kick the armadillo hard shell along the roadway like a rugby ball game for his own private funning around; the armadillos just naturally rolled into an oval shape with their armor plate skins to make a perfect kick ball game. Old Unc joked about starting another huge restaurant serving dillo casserole or packing armadillo sandwiches-to-go in throw-away lunch boxes made from the armor plated shell pelts so as not to waste a thing. Or the armor shells could be made into windbreaker jackets for school children and for oil field workers. My old Unc was way ahead of his time for seeing the need for new things such as having armored motorcycle plated jackets or heavy work coats that just could have been made from the infamous armadillo body shells. But we just resisted another chance for a big Texas sized Taylor-made idea to get started for world wide trade.

We simply meandered onward killing armadillos all the way to Corpus Christi and thus preventing the spread of the leprosy plague chuckled my old uncle. This water front city on a hillside impressed old Unc; he nicknamed it with a cavalier laugh San Fran Texas. We walked up and down those hills like we owned the place till I also thought I would die of air sickness, going from lapping sea level to heady airy heights so fast for me. We walked ourselves nearly to death, meeting ourselves coming and going, as the souls of our shoes flew off to only heaven knows where.

We then walked directly to Houston where the smell of refineries made the air smell like skunks having a major convention. The Houston air had a dynamic jump to it; your whole body skin just crawled in a retch to the local air like

a sudden charge of electricity had been instantly applied to the nasal passage upon detecting the smell. Everybody here in the environs of Houston appeared to be working very hard to make enough money to get out of the reeking olfactory sprawl or so Unc Scotty at first loudly observed. But when I explained the real significance of the Houston smelly air to the booming oil industry, my old true-blooded Scotsman never more complained about the stench; my uncle began to regard this Houston atmosphere as perfume falling like manna from the high heavens above. The Houston skunky pole-cat or civet cat smelling air was fast becoming the sweet smell of success to my uncle Scotty so he now understood why poor folks came to opportunist Houston and then stayed long after getting so hooked like heroin on the fortune making air of Houston. Old Unc was now fast becoming a converted Texan; he was a born-again money-maker for sure. My old uncle had the time-honored can-do primeval spirit that was so alive in the Texas air all about us. The Scotch work ethic was evident all over Houston town in the names of the folks who owned the big companies that were booming. Houston was practically a little Scotland, full of the glen clan names of the old countryside nomenclature from the British Isles. And now my old Unc had thusly found another part of Texas that was his favorite home away from home; he did indeed invest in several local oil companies—he just could not resist a good pungent deal in oozy oiltown Houston.

Houston was strictly an oil town then and was every inch a roustabouts hometown place to live. One part of Houston was much the same in whatever part you went back then. The Houston air however was all that was stinky nasty, though, not like "Little New York" Dallas where the high falutin people themselves put on the hot airs to impress others. While in Houston the air itself was putting itself all over you, as the vapors waltzed across the old bod to bathe us in its baptism by watery sweat into the contagious money making process. My old uncle did not mind walking around in all this humid commerce of Houston town.

Well, my uncle and I continued our walk to see the rest of Texas. We left many new-found friends in Harris County and strolled through Channelview onward toward Liberty County. The rising sun was always now in our eyes as we walked through the great real estate of Texas. Many years had now passed since we left my old homeplace and I was no longer a young whippersnapper. We finally walked all the way to the edge of the Big Thicket forest where so much of the oil industry got its start; the thick woods there was like a primal limber lost area. The long hanging Spanish Moss was similar to a girl's hair hanging down into the swamp waters or so I was minded from my love lost dreams.

The swamps, though, in the deep wooded places were full of alligators. I had to explain quickly the difference between alligator and crocodile to my old Unc; they all looked like giant lizards to Uncle Scotty. But he soon had no tears for crocodiles or alligators. One of those long snouted alligators poked its head up his kilts and got a good mouth full of Taylor fury. That alligator got ahold of his many pleats. Wow, man oh man, did ~~that~~ mean alligator ever get a snout full of family jewels. But that ole alligator met its match when he bit off more than he could chew of my old uncle's family kilt pride. My old uncle jumped about a lot more than when he had dropped that penny in the hot desert sand. The more my old Unc jumped and ran, the harder that ole alligator held-on for dear life like he had sniffed or had swiped some great family jewels from its private place of safe keeping. My uncle of course kicked a lot and

yelped like he had been got ahold of where he lives the most but finally old Unck swung around real fast to whirl that ole alligator out of the water completely, all sixty-five feet of it. That over-sized lizard was hurled upward into the big thicket treetops high above us. The long tail of that alligator got caught in the stringy entanglement of the Spanish moss and the thick tree limbs; that ornery alligator's tail got lodged somehow fast between the gnarled slant of the tree trunk and then just naturally whip lashed itself to death trying to get loose. My Uncle Scotty quickly sat down and proceeded to make 48 pairs of shoes and 33 sets of luggage out of the skinned hide, plus various other little sundries—again, that old walking cane came in handy as a good carving knife. The meat served up real good from that alligator carcass, too. My old Unck decided to start another big restaurant serving alligator burgers to the truly brave hungry Texans not afraid of tough food with a bite in it, or food that bites back as my old uncle often said.

To catch enough alligators for restaurant fare would require a careful system so we made a science out of it. My old uncle then really enjoyed alligator hunting or poaching as some would swear on a Bible of technicalities, more than anything I ever saw him do besides making money. He couldn't get enough of all that free alligator shoes and luggage hides plus ample meat for selling them gator burgers. That old Scotsman was hooked on alligator poaching as it were called. But that old man was not able to wrestle the gators all the time out of the swamp waters by his worn kilts, and I felt that I was still too young to die as mere alligator bait. That sly Scots uncle of mine used hunting dogs as bait to go baying and running after the live alligator scent. Some of the dogs, though, were not fast enough and thus got et up in one big gulp by those big jaws. Old Unck used live bait always to catch all his wild alligators that gave us such a bite to the gator burgers.

Alligator bait was not easy to come by. Wild dogs were once easy enough to find for the nightly hunt, but the hot tamale vendors in town had caught all the local roaming dogs to make into their own chili speciality. Thus, my old uncle Scotty decided to get fish heads from the Galveston wharves to use as his live alligator substitute bait. The bait was placed in rope nets above the swamp land and would hang low like the Spanish moss itself so the gators just stick their curious toothy snouts up to gulp down a fishy looking morsel. The alligators naturally took to the smelly bait, net and all; but the netting tangled in their teeth like giant floss, at which time the net enable us to pull the bewildered gator higher into the tree tops. The thrashing reptile whipped its tail like a Lash LaRue whip master. You know, all those ole mean alligators beat themselves to death for us, while we just looked on. And that clever technique worked at least a million times more for my old uncle or so it seemed. Uncle Scotty was always busy carving-up the hides into shoes and sets of luggage so I was no longer his needed tour guide companion. Old Unck was now into alligators for sure; he could process a thousand alligators a day when he set his mind to it so he stayed here in the seclusion of the Big Thicket forest to make a good going business out of his shoe and luggage company that he had founded. He shipped orders all over the world. Besides, the Gator Burgers were a hit when charcoaled so the old uncle was very busy and had surely found his home away from home in the friendly Texican country far removed from the motherland Scotland's roots of the old world contentment.

I decided to go back home to my own Texican roots in the north-central part of deep East Texas. A place called Commerce was my birthplace. I was

lonesome for all the things that I had been so anxious to leave when I first began my grand walking tour guide excursion of Texas for the benefit of my old uncle Scotty from his homeland Aberdeen, Scotland. Old Unck no longer needed me even as congenial company to discuss his deep philosophy of life with. I was no longer a half-grown kid of age 14; I was twenty-one years old. And the twentieth century was also all grown-up, us being the very same birthday age. I was ready for anything, to live life to the fullest. Making money was not my only pursuit like my old uncle Scotty. My old Unck was money hungry like a shark in deep waters after raw meat.

Making money in a new business venture like the Gator Burgers kept my old uncle Scotty's mind working over-time in high gear for economic gain. Money matters were his long suit in life; uncle Scotty was a stingy-gut man. He even called himself a skinflint, saying the truth about himself was not mere self-deprecating as some neurotic folks think or fear to do for the fun of it like a true Texan does. My old Unck had become a real Texan through and through by stating whatever was on his mind—speaking the truth about everything was his trademark, and such brutal honesty made my old uncle Scotty a good candidate for becoming or remaining a permanent true-blue Texan. That old man never left the Big Thicket forest to my knowledge, except for one time, and he may yet still be alive down there somewhere. I do know for a fact that the Great Depression of the 1930's did not bother my old uncle any; he said that he always lived that paltry way which was to be as cheap as possible. Thus, poverty was no stranger to his lifestyle or mentality. And he could be a real genuine gold plated stingy-gut, as I said before. Well, I returned home to see what all I had been missing. And I went back home to get married.

I married the girl of my dreams; she was a Texas heiress of course. She had her own money, in a big bank account, and kept it signatored that way in her own name naturally like a good girl should according to her daddy's wise advice. She was not a stingy-gut like my old Scots uncle, but she was of the blood, descended from all Scots people; she was pure and simple all Scotch or so she often said. She was certainly not simple minded since she knew to keep ahold of her own purse strings. She was called Miss Ella because that was her name, and also a raving beauty who was well-liked was always referred to as "Miss" even after getting married back in my young days. Miss Ella could work circles around any man alive; she had muscles larger than mine but wore lacy sleeves to cover her strong points. Her strength lay in looking so very feminine and dainty while being anything but the weaker sex. Miss Ella won a beauty contest back when the Rubens woman was in fashion so I knew that I had me a prize winner for sure and she had a contest banner to prove it, no contender coming close. Even her two skinny flapper shaped sisters with their wave of the future Twiggy looks gave no real competition back in my hay day. I didn't want me no skinny undernourished gal who could not be workbrittle enough to hold her end of the work load. My sweetheart was a country girl, a real farm gal; you could take the girl out of the country but you can't take the country out of the girl—that was the way my sweet noble wife was. She did all her own housework and never needed or wanted any maids to get in her way—she could do the work faster and better than ten servants, never to give no-mind to worry about theft of her personal things from the hired help. She did all the housework herself in her lovely ancestral mansion on the landgrant homeplace of hers. Miss Ella kept a beautiful flower garden that won "yard of the month" often from the city planners plus she grew the best vegetable garden in the world this side of paradise itself. And my Miss Ella made her own

clothes, yet bought Neiman-Marcus labels to sew into the back collars. This gal was for-real. And she was all mine, thank goodness. All this perfection of Texas goodness had one flaw, though. She required complete fidelity from me. I could not be like all my manly friends and mess around with loose honky tonk women. Some guys can lie and get away with it when they tell wild tales. Not me. But the truth was built inside me like old George Washington who could not tell a lie—well, I guess I could tell a lie with my smooth talking tongue but why run the risk of getting caught. Besides, Miss Ella could detect when I was fibbing or laying down little white lies as she called my fabrications. Miss Ella could spot a lie a mile off. She said that I have a hang-dog whipped pup look on my guilty face which gives my badself away. I never wanted to run the risk of losing that gal of mine even after fifty-seven years of marriage so I had to stay true and be better than my old self to that girl of my dreams. Also, she was kin to half the state of Texas families and would thus have heard any rumor of my philandering, and Texas folks do talk a lot as you undoubtedly know by now so my goose would have been cooked for sure! Miss Ella was blue blooded royal descended from the really old cavalier DAR families and also was branch-water kin to most of the Texas landed gentry so I had no choice but to be true-blue good to that hard working lady-of-high-toned-quality. Or else I would get tarred and feathered and rid out of town on a rail by some of her good intentioned relatives. Miss Ella's family was well-known and on public display like a rare gemstone in a museum; her family had organized a wagon train of friends to the famed California goldrush of 1849 and then returned as founders of Dallas County with the other original settlers of Texas.

My sweetheart Miss Ella herself was an original or one-of-a-kind good gal. She was top quality stuff that I meant from the start to keep as my very own, but she was not haughty and all puffed-up like the nouveau riche folks today—my Miss Ella was never parvenu as my good cajun buddies would say. She must have liked something about me from the first sight of my ornery hide because Miss Ella sure never let go of me. I never could just go fooling around. She did not have to keep an eagle watchful evil eye on me or act jealous like a silly redneck mamma; Miss Ella had me on a leash of love knots. She was a very clever lady, smart enough to make me look sharp and even to make me think that everything she wanted me to do was really my idea. Just like Miss Ella really chased after me but made it look like I was doing all the running after her—she just ran slow enough for me to catch her. My whole fifty-seven years of married life has been like that with Miss Ella. Her being an heiress, so rich and all, she let folks think that I ran her business interests—she let me sign checks to pay bills but that was all. Miss Ella kept the check book locked in her pretty desk drawer and kept the key on a locket chain around her neck, just where I kept myself hanging around her anyway. She wrote the check sum and I only signed on the dotted line so that my macho image would look good. But my Miss Ella kept those purse strings tied around her neck all the time. Of course I was always eager to be right there by her money bags side, like a good old fashioned husband should be.

A good husband was to be well cared for according to my sweetheart wife Miss Ella. She cooked nutritious meals naturally and ironed all my clothes herself. She kept enough starch in my trousers that they could stand-up by themselves. But best of all, my sweet wife would draw my bath water and even lay out my clothes. Miss Ella also washed my back with deep soapy suds full

of loving gentle strokes. She does everything for me, now going on toward fifty-eight years for all that tender loving care from her. Miss Ella attends to my every need before I realize it so you can understand that I would never want to lose a good woman like that or ever want to leave her for another gal that I would have to break in to doing all these nice things for me. I have been seduced by luxuries of personal love pats. Also, I could never run away from Miss Ella since I do not know where my clothes are kept even; Miss Ella is so clever in seeming to be my personal servant laying out my clothes for me to bathe in genteel luxury so that before I knew it I was her love slave in this fifty-odd year love trap.

A love-trap marriage is truly one in a million but is not something that I would ever want to do again, or be able to do another time. Once is more than enough for a real good genuine Texas bred gal like my Miss Ella. She can't be bested in all the world, ever. Miss Ella is beyond comparison so I could never find anyone so workbrittle as she is, much less no such animal that is better in all the whole universe of Texas does not exist. Well, getting a new wife which was really my first encounter with wedlock took all my spare time. No more lazing around for me. A new wife for me as a cocky young man meant that I had to change my ways of doing nothing, fast. Remember, I was real good at doing nothing. Now that I was married and all, I had to become real good at looking like I was busy all the time to keep from being reputed as a doolless bum because my Scottish relatives looked down on any worthless cad of a lad not doing his duty. My relatives were all over the place, too. And I now had more married duty than you could shake a stick at. No more simple lazing around just for the ornery fun of it now that I was a married man to boot. I had to be better than my old self now that I was in the highly praised state of matrimonial holy bliss in this most blessed state of Texas. Scots blooded people take very seriously whatever state of being they are in, and you had better be very good at it too. Man, was I ever good at being better than I could ever possibly be. I was the best ole boy at being "gooder" than anyone could ever be. Boy, oh, howdy, could I ever out-best the best of the lot at being better than my good ole former self. My Texan grit got put to the test of time in this lifetime marriage and thus got the better of my Texas pride of being the best. All my cajun friends would say that I was a real prince of a guy at being the very best I could be according to their good coonass lingo from Louisiana would hear tell.

I was indeed the best at being gooder than myself could ever possibly be. I could be real good faster than a New York minute if I was just lazing along. But if I was really in a big hurry or in a true rush to beat myself at the old New York minute record, then I could get going into a much faster New Jersey second timed trials with my good ole Texan fast boy routine. No body alive certainly could not out-best me, not till hell froze over in July could a better Texan than me come along. I could thus "who-raw" myself silly to be faster than my last good ole boy record. And my new wife Miss Ella though could get the best of me if she had-a-wanted to, but she was too refined to want to make me look second rate. Miss Ella however would pull a real rusty dusty fit to keep my good character image picture perfect when someone else would dare criticize me to her pretty face. And I naturally would walk backwards to Chicago to avoid a fuss with that high-toned-lady-of-quality of mine

wife called Miss Ella. I wanted to please that lovely woman of mine from the very first moment I ever laid eyes on her picture; I wanted to give her everything she did not already have, so since she was an heiress and all, then I gave her just what she did not possess already which was a poor ole boy like myself to pamper to death and to spoil rotten. But I did want from the very start of our marriage to have my own money to buy Miss Ella really nice gifts so that she would not have to know exactly what I paid for her fancy presents. Thus, she put me into a dandy business of my very own roofing local houses. I did real well, too. I had a natural talent that I never knew about till then; I could just walk around a house to get its true roof top measurements. I just circled the house by taking yard long strides to measure the square footage of the roof tops with my Taylor-made feet flat on the ground so I could then very quickly tally my results and then divide by three to figure my losses or gains. I never lost but two cents of computations to a college professor who tried to out-best my calculations; he was a bloody Englishman educator who stood-up to my tried and true figuring ways by having his college class to measure his whole house; took them thirty-five math students a full week with walking tape measures and using slide rulers to do what I can appraise or estimate the count in my ole Bumstead head in less than ten minutes just traversing the lawns surrounding his house while also talking-up a blue streak about other unrelated matters—his uppity attitude assumed that big talkers are the village idiot mentality but then that is an Englishman for you when up against a true-blue Scots-Irishman like me. Anyway, I was a whiz-bang mathematician at reckoning business in my thick Texan head and you had better believe it, too.

Business was my long suit back then. I made twenty times more money per day in cash from that roofing company than I did from my regular job railroad-ing. I kept both jobs going at the same time till the Great Depression hit. I was a hot shot railroading man earning five dollars a day; I knew the railroad business inside out (I also had an inside straight line connection to the well-known tycoon owners who lived in their fancy railway cars—Hetty Green's son Edward and his sister Sylvia as well as Jay Gould's son—they all came and went through the railroad yards from Greenville, Texas to Houston). I was yardmaster in Commerce during World War I and also in Houston Southern Pacific because those railhead magnates liked my hard working ways for such a youngster who looked old beyond my tender years. I was fourteen going-on twenty-one years old according to my mature looks back then; now, I am fat and do not look so elderly for an old geezer today. I nearly got rich from working as a yardmaster in Houston and Commerce; I could easily do the work of two men when I was a mere lad of a boy, plus hop around being a tour guide to my old Unck Scotty from the mother country. And that ain't no Texas style tall tale either. I got too much pride to lie about important things, and besides my sweetheart wife Miss Ella keeps me truthful with her own holier-than-thou eyes rolling like Las Vegas pin ball machines in tilt when I fib or dare tell a big windy.

The teetotal telling truth of the matter is that I had to settle down and be a good hard working husband to Miss Ella. My roofing business supplemented our railroad salary just fine. But I did so well selling Texaco roofing materials that I was soon working on my second million dollar fortune; I just skipped the first million bucks because it is the hardest to make as I was so often told by folks here. I wanted a fast get away from the threat of the poor house blues. Now, you can further see why I always most nearly try to please my new

wife Miss Ella, by working hard and earning good honest dollars, not blood money like some moguls in history have done anything in the name of greed. I wanted that gal of my dreams to be proud of me. But I did have a bad habit that my dear wife disliked very much, though. I would drink the houch sometimes on a long fishing trip with the boys. Of course, I drank the national beer of Texas brand most of the time, never drank any imported long neck beers of any sort, even from nearby yankeeland. Everything made local is my motto to buy; I am a good American and also too Texanized to purchase foreign goods. And now my family also drives the national car of Texas as well. But not just to keep in high Texas chic style like some pseudo Texans do; the car is truly the best for the money and prestige. We paid cash on the barrel head and I go licketsplit in our new car even now—yes, indeed, drove like a wild Indian from red-man Oklahoma as I have always done. Even my son, who is a good chip off the old Taylor-made block, drove so fast that he blew the license plates off the rear end of his sporty Mustang automobile. And that ain't no drunken driver tall Texan tale, either. Driving and drinking was never my long suit to do both at the same time. Drinking the hair of the dog sometimes did not please my wife Miss Ella. Thus, she went on a lot of my fishing trips as a good sport just to keep me with no alcohol on my baited breath.

Fishing was my great joy next to being married to Miss Ella. I always caught the biggest fish like I married the best woman. I owned all the fancy latest fly-and-casting rod equipment in Texas. The biggest fishes in Texas just naturally had the curiosity to come see what my latest fly bait looked like; you see, I had a renowned rapport among all schools of fish—I am sure you are smart enough by now to figure out that I had a pretty fishy reputation at that. But I could understand fish language among all the various schools of fish so that is the honest-to-goodness Texas sized truth if I ever spoke it. Also, my fancy casting style mesmerized those big google fish eyes right out of the water; those large fishes were hooked before they even knew it. Each time I caught a fish so large that no one had ever seen that big of a catch before in big old Texas. I just kept outdoing myself all the time. Miss Ella eagerly scraped clean the scales right off those big fishes before anyone had time to read their accurate inbred weight or else I would be a famous world-national champion of Texas fisherman to this day (the fine fish that I caught in Texas always had their accurate grown weight already recorded conveniently on their natural growing scales on their pulsating sides by God's own nature-bound hand, so cleaning them fishes ruined my scaley record keeping all to pieces). But just knowing that I am the best in Texas is more than good enough for me and besides who am I to complain about anything so workbrittle that my sweetheart wife Miss Ella would do! No how, I ain't full of self-importance record breaking foolishness like some slap-happy goofus good-ole-boys are.

My good wife Miss Ella thusly kept me sober as a judge far away from the houch and hence honest-bright truthful about my scaley fishing records. After all, she kept those old fish scales handy in a paper bag just to read them as reminders of the accurate **weights** later in case I should dare lie about the big fish that got away. So, I don't talk much about those scaley records around her. Miss Ella was always just that nasty-nice sweet about manly things that she thought was naughty; she knew how to ever so innocently seeming throw a monkey wrench in such double-standard masculine nasty-minded things by being

johnny-on-the-spot generous and helpful to even cook the freshly caught fish on our fun-time outings. We consequently put-up with her civilizing ways influencing us because all we guys liked her good cooking and especially her cleaning-up dirty dishes afterwards—we were hookwinked spoiled or seduced by the sweet humored luxury of Miss Ella's yummy cooking ways on our camping trips. She was a real good trooper when it came to roughing it better than any man could. But we fellows paid the ultimate price for letting Miss Ella serve us the good meals on our outdoors expeditions; we could do no houch or any cussing the way we usually could because of Miss Ella being such a high-toned-lady-of-quality and all. My wife Miss Ella was still head and shoulders above all other wives; my elder brother Will's wife Ida was a real ring-tailed-tutor of a shrew about fishing parties. Ida said she hated the two words "go fishing" and wished everything to do with anglers was obliterated from the English language—Ida's linguistic disinterest in fish went beyond mere unreasonable twaddle. And that raving woman Ida talked her head off about hating fishing parties to everyone who would listen, so naturally my brother Will had to go fishing in a big fat hurry just to escape her ranting wrath. My new wife Miss Ella never ranted and raved about anything; she had a quiet disappointed look that told how unhappy she was beyond words when she got her feelings hurt. And that dejected look said much more than any loud words ever could. I was afraid to make that sad look stay on Miss Ella's face since I did not want to lose her to ill gotten wayward looks.

My new wife Miss Ella though was not afraid of anything I liked to do, much less to get her hands dirty; she was the ideal workbrittle wife. Even for our own wedding, Miss Ella baked the nuptial cake herself that was as tall as we were. We needed a huge cake, too, because half of Texas showed up naturally to see two true characters like us get hitched to each other of all things.

We, of course, had a big Texas style wedding at her cousin Beulah Winniford Benton's home in Greenville, Texas. My wife's old landgrant homeplace named Winniford Way was being decorated for its reputed annual Christmas party so we had to book a relative's fancy home for our toot. The in-law hubby Henry Benton was the best photographer in Texas by trade so we had the finest pictures for our album. We planned a double ring ceremony full of sentimental beautiful traditional things. Half of Texas indeed showed for the grande event because Miss Ella was kin to most of the old-line landed gentry, and I was related to the other half of Texas good-ole-boy perfection. Our wedding was full of the joyous festive thrills since the Christmas season was fast upon us.

Yes, Miss Ella and I got married in December of 1924. Only half of her fine kinsmen showed for the event and the other half of her relatives were out buying gifts in remembrance for baby Jesus's birthday. Those elegant Texans who did not attend our wedding must have felt guilt or regret; they sent nicer gifts in their absentia than those who attended actually brought us. Some of our Texas elite cousins were too busy shopping for the Christ child's birthday to attend our routine wedding so only half of Texas could attend our love knot tying ceremony. We chose the Christmas season so that we could always be Texas proud that the whole world of Christendom was celebrating our wedding anniversary with us in the future to create a sweet festive feeling about our special love day. Also, the cold weather in December is the best time to get married—tis a good excuse for snuggling up together and thus not be considered a dirty old man to still be in bed after sun up. As was the thing back then, I wore clothes to bed on the honeymoon night, dressed in blue pajamas, and my Miss

Ella wore pink gloves to the elbows and was great at talking sweet nothings nearly to death in my ear for a full year so I fell into deep slumber to rest like a new-born babe. We consummated our marriage for sure to public satisfaction when our first born arrived nearly two years later. Consummated, though sounds like a fancy food so frenchified that it is too grande for words or else is a continental style soup made into a hot Texas stew, rather than an intimate bedroom function. We did not have a baby for nearly two years just to keep the gossiping wags from tickling their tongue all over the place called Commerce about us and our baby-making ways.

The gossipers just always said we were a beautiful couple together and thus should have lovely looking children. Gossips back in my day used to rule the nights and days of folks' lives like mighty potentates when appearances meant everything in a strict moral society that is controlled by the holier-than-thou highly churchied bench warmers. Lordy mercy, those religious moss-backs always mentioned our having lovely children ever time they could, like speaking pornographic passages during polite society appearances; they all but drew graphic pictures on how to begat our lovely children and that it was our Christian duty to have'em, too. Well, I very soon got tired of their elegant innuendoes of dirty talk masked as genuine Christian concern about personal matters really none of their business. But their conservative totalitarian mentality kept suppressive fear alive and well in our democracy or place called Commerce deep in East Texas so like a true red blooded Texan I gave them fuel for righteous indignation. I just gave them a cold shoulder of wordy ammunition by telling them that the real reason that I got married in the first place was that I was so hot blooded that I was about to have a baby all by myself—that gave their wagging tongue some verbose fuel to tastefully digest and spread like the sensuous plague they were. A cold eyed stare never resulted when they got a tasty tidbit full of double entendres from me, only a happy look filled their countenance as they could then hardly leave fast enough to be the first to tell all. Their pious hypocristy act was just one of many examples of inching infringements on our wasted but repressed lives in this goodie-two-shoes banned Bible Belt town.

Miss Ella and I did not lead a suppressive or highly repressed quashed life at all; we had our laugh-a-minute fun times that subdued or quelled the wonderment of the gossips themselves. We had respectable help from another young newly wed couple who were our best friends and dearest kinsmen. Miss Ella's brother Everette Winniford married my niece Elsie Taylor so we became running buddies and cohorts like the famous Golddust twins—we were bonded together by the spendable Winniford gold fortune from the California goldrush days. What one starry eyed couple could not think to do for fun, then the other fun loving pair could. We all ran around together funning it up true to the old timey Texas style. We enjoyed life beyond measure; the war to end all wars had just been fought and won by us Americans; we were the golden aged children of the world. And our world was the whole blessed state of Texas.

My new wife Miss Ella was a Texas heiress or so everybody thought. She had money in the bank to burn, so much that even she did not know how much she was worth or so jealous Elsie Taylor-Winniford would say when she came sideling up to me with her Uncle Tom routine on me to get cash on hand. Miss Elsie my niece did not marry a rich man; he did own a new car that his father gave him that year on his twenty-first birthday for never smoking or drinking but that was the soul extent of his worldlygoods. His sister, my new wife

however did have her own fortune. She had worked for her money and had thus earned every red cent of it, too, as I soon learned. Miss Ella's daddy did not pamper his children into laziness like some fine rich gentlemen have been known to do and then live to regret when they spend the family into poverty by being too haughty to work. Well, Miss Ella worked for every cent she had in the bank; **her dad never** gave a penny for his children to spend; he bought all their necessities of course but gave no money to spend; they had to earn every dime. Miss Ella's dad gave each child a cow that they could feed and then allow to bear calves or else sell the "golden goose" cow right then for candy money. My sweetheart let her cow multiply into a herd of one hundred. By the time she was married a tidy sum of ten thousand dollars was in the savings account in addition to the hundred head of cows. Miss Ella's brothers spent their legacy gifts as soon as they got the beef on the hoof—boys need pocket money to spend was the excuse. Like I always have said, my sweetheart wife was very workbrittle.

Miss Ella worked in the home harder than most career gals; she never had a job to meet the public. And maybe that is why she is so friendly toward folks; she never saw their mean side. Anyhow, Miss Ella was **no** slouch when it came to hard work at home or on a fishing trip. But my love bug gal was no push-over either. She could be a love pill rather than a love bug gal when her good natured self had been unfairly taken advantage of, her being a high-toned-lady-of-quality and all. A fine lady on a pedestal never does come down off it, ever, from a fuss fight. I should know; she does not come down to anyone's common level to get even; she pulls you up to her lofty airy intolerance of the silent treatment stare that can scare a young Texas man to death. That's when the girl of your dreams can become a living nightmare for sure. To show you what I mean, Miss Ella and I had our first major argument that proved the honeymoon lovey-doveyness was over or that the love luster was not so hot-to-trot and raunchy as at first. Well anyway, Miss Ella shared her heiress wealth most generously; she bought me a new flivver Ford automobile so that I could run about town and then let her drive her own new Pontiac all for herself because that fancy Pontiac had all the latest experiental improvements such as a heater and ignition started—I still had to crank my new flivver car to get ginning and thus nearly broke my arm when it got cranking suddenly to start-up. My common basic no-nonsense automobile cost a mere \$245 but did have the new fangled eisenglass curtains and absolutely no heater—folks swore that the newer roll glass sealed doors would suffocate anyone to death and should thus be outlawed. Miss Ella's fancy deluxe vehicle cost \$365 COD since she paid cash as usual for everything, including our three bedroom two story house with bay windows that was priced at \$900 in 1925 but that lovely home sold for \$250,000 in 1981. I of course let my sweetheart heiress wife purchase anything to her heart's content that she was willing to pay for. Her daddy, though, thought she was spending money foolish to buy two cars when even one was still considered a luxury item back then. Thus, we had no arguments over money, and I had no qualms about helping spend all that Winniford family fortune on our newly wed needs. But we did go to Neiman-Marcus where Miss Ella bought a brand spanking new fur coat for \$500. My three piece blue serge suit with shirt, tie and underwear cost only fifteen dollars and my fine heavy winter wool coat was priced at a walloping \$45. Consequently, that fur coat boggled my poor mind, joalted me headlong into the high finances of reality of the long fussy days of tomorrow; that fur coat coast twice as much as my new car—that would be

like a thirty thousand dollar fur coat today. I just could not stop talking about it being higher than cat's back all the way home and then well into the next day. My sweetheart got sick and tired of hearing my grumbling. I simply could not believe that anyone that I knew would even want to buy such an expensive fur coat, much less have the money to actually buy it when it cost twice as much as my new car. Miss Ella had already grabbed me by the heart strings with her generous purse strings so I should have known better than to harp so long about her spending her money. She never let me forget that I was a fuss budget and till my dying day I will hear no end to my stingy-gut ways, and I had always disliked hearing my old Unck Scotty harp about his stinginess so I really was being ugly over nothing at all. Miss Ella then got even sweeter to me, in order to kill me with kindness over my hardnosed griping when she bought more surprises. It was never a dull moment around my sweetheart Miss Ella. We were flying high, this flapper lady and me; we were literally the beautiful people of our day in Texas.

Miss Ella of course had won a beauty contest and had a winner's banner to prove her lovely status in that matter so I was like the beauty-and-the-beast with that great gal of my dreams. She was too good to be true and most of the time she was too good for words. My words of reprisal about her expensive fur coat rankled like death bell'knells in her sweet ears; we fumed over those fussy times when we got angered about something else; that fur coat episode came back to haunt me like a hairy beast for the next fifty-odd years when we got miffed about spending habits of each other; we buried the hatchet of our furry quarrel with the hairy handle just sticking out enough to dig it all back up for one more bickering spell. That fur coat though did come in handy during the long cold winters of the northeast part of East Texas; she was snug as a love bug in that furry thing of hers as she went all over Dallas County visiting her relatives. And she looked snazzy with fur up to her nose so blue in that pretty new Pontiac of hers.

That maroon colored Pontiac was a swell touring car. I liked to put-on hot airs during the winter gaming around when we drove across frozen ponds with a sled tied onto the back bumper to pull our risk-taking fun-loving kissing cousins all over the Texas terrain. The new fangled heater in that flashy Pontiac thawed us all out just before we turned to ice or "friz" to death by becoming an ice cream cone shaped like a blue nosed barbie doll. We jack-knifed all over the icy ponds in the whole countryside of the north central part of East Texas. In those days, snow in East Texas was up to your britches; snow was always waist high up to the top of adult britches belt line so we had plenty of icy weather to do our car chasing pond sledding fun times. The ponds froze solid and never broke through when our heavy luxury touring car whiz banged across the frozen pool. Our automated pond sledding reputation was all over that part of Texas; farmers gladly opened their pasture gates to let us drive across their frozen ponds—t'was an entertainment to watch that swishy sliding Pontiac cavort across the ice with our relatives holding-on for dear life to that sled. We were the rage all over East Texas's three-hundred miles length from top to bottom and across the two-hundred-and-fifty miles width and breath. We could ice skate our Pontiac car all over the place with the greatest of ease. Never once did the ice crack or we would have been dead ducks, for sure. My niece Elsie liked doing risky fun-loving-things. Elsie lived dangerously like a cool but scared cat on a hot tin roof; she was a dare-devil artist at getting everyone to follow suit with her chancey ventures. Elsie

could double-dog-dare you into a tizzie doing dangerous risky things on the spur of the moment faster than greased lightning bolts can strike twice in the same Texas spot. But I ain't never one to bad mouth no Texas borne high-toned-lady-of-quality, especially one who is double kinfolks to me like Elsie is. Yet, Elsie egged us onward to test our endurance for fool hearted fun loving times. She though ran a close second to my Miss Ella on finding good clean Texas fun to enjoy; my Scotch pride wife Miss Ella had the luck of the Irish on her side for someone not Irish born—everything came out smelling like a rose with no harm done if Miss Ella took part. Miss Ella was the rage of Texas and the new darling of the whole Taylor family. That popularity gave some consternation to the ever jealous Elsie Taylor Winniford, but that is another Texas sized story of ill repute about nasty-nice family acting reunions

The Taylor family annual reunions really proved loads of Texas sized funning around. The annual Taylor reunion always had at least twenty-five hundred Taylors by surname there and over ten thousand more whose branch water kinship name barely entitled them attendance in the first place but all our relatives were indeed welcome. The reason so many Taylors exist as a surname is because horse thieves in the olden days wanted to gain respectability after enjoying a purloined fortune and thus getting religion so all the born-again thieving Christians who were then reformed horse stealers took the good name Taylor to gain quick respectability from their fallen grace state of being. Now, that's why so many Taylor folks by name exist in this great country of ours. Horse thieves know a good thing when they see or hear it in the name Taylor. Even the ornery ole John Wesley Hardin, who shot a man for snoring, married a Taylor—and that was nearly as good as being one for him (or that was good enough redemption for him, once exclaimed my prim and proper wife Miss Ella with a delivish glimmer of genuine Scots humor dancing in her eager eyes after a tiff referring to her fur coat). I met my match more than once with that gal of mine when I gave her my name Taylor to wear forever and ever.

The Taylor family reunion was also held each year to see who could out lie or tell bigger windies than the next Taylor-made joke to "who-raw" each other the most. The Taylor family held the biggest and oldest reunion in the country. All the newly weds were sure to go to our family reunion together to show-off our new stuff of proud spouses. We were all in competition with each other without really knowing it or meaning it in a bad way. Elsie's new husband Everette Winniford was no match for my beautiful Miss Ella, even though he was her brother—our children ended up being first and second cousins to each other. The reunion was financed by Commerce businessman Uncle William Taylor whose daughter married a Wynn from Winnsboro and then moved to Dallas. But my wife Miss Ella had a great personality without equal. The whole Taylor family clan showed up to meet that famous beauty queen of mine and also to meet her famous violin playing father and Uncle Sam Winniford who was also there; Sam Winniford was the best fiddler in Texas. He had played for presidents of the United States for decades; his cousin Adlai Stevenson had introduced him to Washington, D.C. dignitaries as the finest violinist in Texas; he played the capitol society for all it was worth way back when. That famous fiddler uncle of hers could wrap his long six foot six frame legs easily around each other like a plastic man or play-dough clay figure and then bend that bow of his to a snappy tune. We all danced all over the place and onto the tables. Everyone became dancing fools. Miss Ella and I danced on the furniture, with dignity of course, to razoo or dart in-and-out real fast upon one table top

to the next. We were the rage. And everybody courageous got into the cavalier act or wild fun of it all, too. We Taylors could rawhide and who-raw each other better than anyone this side of heaven—rawhide or who-raw is Texas talk for playing practical jokes on one another just for the good clean fun of it all. This annual reunion Taylor family event of 1925 was the best ever; all the kissing cousins got into the act true to form, being Taylor-made elegance from selective birth and all that good stuff. We were all well-bred folks from the landed gentry class. Miss Ella and I were already fifth cousins anyway through the auntie Millie Taylor line kin to the Jointers of the Ellis-Landtroop clans. But now my Miss Ella was no longer just branchwater kinfolks; she was main line clan member and queen of the reunion ball at that, belle of the party.

All the immediate family relatives made their presence felt at this annual Taylor reunion shindig. All the regular double cousins and triple related keith-and-kin were in full attendance because this was the biggest family blast event for most of those old folks all year long. My own mother Laura Estelle Sullivan Taylor's old nigger slave-days Mammy Duggan was there with bells on to approve, or not accept, my Miss Ella officially into the family as good enough and to instruct my new wife on how to cater to my every need—you would have thought my Miss Ella herself was a darkie learning how to serve her new lord-and-master of the manor. And that was indeed very white of my good loving ole nigger Mammy to do her duty of informing a newly fetched Taylor bride on how to be a perfect Taylor-made spouse, as only my sweet Mammy Duggan could say it, to keep my household up-to-snuff. Wow, my Mammy Duggan had an exact word for every thing, and that is where I learned all my good mannered sayings. But Mammy Duggan had only good words for my Miss Ella—Mammy Duggan loved the stuffing out of my new wife, for she was indeed fetching when she wanted to be. Taylor named women are just always the most important souls in the whole Texas universe because they are the motherhood of our namesake sons to bear all our future legitimized legacy—a real Taylor can't be too particular when picking a woman for his wife. The Taylor men don't wed second-rate gals—we just naturally go after the vintage stuff. I am just like my ole daddy who married himself a genuine Irish princess of the house of Giles on her pedigreed pedestal of a high dais that her good ole slave-days nigger Mammy Duggan put her blue-nosed royal self. And then my own brand-new wife Miss Ella Winniford was a pure blue-blooded Scottish descendant from King Robert Bruce of his lengthy noble line. We Taylor had the royal label all over the place.

The whole Taylor family was all over the reunion place joking and funning each other to pieces, to rawhide and whoraw the dickens out of everyone handy. We had reunited kinsmen from all over the country; the damn yankee branch of the family assembled from New York, New England, Pennsylvania, Illinois and California as well now that they were no longer afraid to show their face South since our old Texanized Pennsylvania-Dutch Grandmaw Miz 3-M died (she never had ceased fighting lost causes that no one cared to remember anymore). Miss Ella memorized everyone's name; twelve other cousins with my exact full name and look-a-like bull face stepped forward to obey her every wish when she called my name—to rawhide for the devilment clean fun of it all. All us Taylor cousins looked much alike in our spittin' image just as a Hereford bull favors its whole herd sired, almost like looking into a soul-bearing drenched mirror of truth syrup to see our own face on another guy's head—we all stood head and shoulders tall in favoring each other. Scotsmen always look like their daddy more than their mamma—that's a good godly blessing to keep the gene pool heritage or family tree genealogy very clear-cut obviously ethnic pure, with no possible messing-around cockold bastards on the blood line. Even my Unck Scott from my earlier walk around Texas attended this family reunion to give his blessing to us, and that was indeed all he gave. Unck wore his kilts solely to dance a jig in true Scotch style to benefit all my in-law Winniford clan who were pure Scots descended with all their other Scotsmen Ellis, Alexander, Hers ton and Stewart Wilson kinfolks in full attendance.

My Scotsman Uncle was a dancing fool, true to family fashion or to the local rage, cavorting all over the place to show himself in rhythmic control flouncing his clan colors high into the air like grande family jewels on royal public state display. This was a sight to behold, glaring to the seat of his holy pants showing-off so to speak. Unck nearly split his drawers wide open, though, with my new workbrittle in-laws; my uncle brought no belated wedding gift at all. Old Uncle Scotty simply gave us a verbal blessing since words are indeed cheaper than deeds or so that stingy-gut old Scotsman kept saying ever so convincingly. Old Unck never really understood the customs of us Americans. Uncle Scotty especially did not comprehend why our annual Taylor family reunion celebration started on June 19th or old Emancipation Texas Day known as nigger Juneteenth Day so that the colored folks kissing cousins from the Cherrywood Plantation near Winnsboro could attend with jubilating grandiose fun times—the family reunion watermelon seed spitting contests were often won by the countrified plantation folks. The family reunion always lasted through July 4 when the watermelons were good and ripe in plentiful supply as a free gift to the whole family; I could zing more seeds farther than anyone in the whole state of Texas when I set my pucker to it. I could stick my wet fingered tongue into the air and go with the flowing breezes as my seeds spurted from my pursed lips to send a seedy grain half way around the North Central part of East Texas when I got myself to blowing hard like I am doing now. Man, was I ever a blow-hard kind of fun loving guy back then. Boy, oh boy, I populated more watermelon patches by this spore type style than ole Johnny Appleseed did in all his years of planting trees. I was the local-yokel Johnny Appleseed-Tom Taylor watermelon seed planter of Texas. I could back then out populate any other fast talking seed-spitting man in Texas at those annual reunion contests when I wanted to win and be known as a number one kind of guy.

We celebrated the longest of all the kinfolks at the reunion of 1925; we refused to leave first or even next to last. My new wife Miss Ella and I were the best at doing whatever we set our minds to do; we were a good match for each other in every respect. We stayed till last and then had to clean-up the whole littered debris mess. But it was worth it all to just say we out-lasting all the Taylor-made activities. We were truly the best of the very best family in all the whole universe of Texas. Miss Ella and I already had good experience for out-lasting everyone at a big splendid shindig. We had also rejoiced the longest at our own wedding feast after that elegant ceremony. We celebrated for days without end until we felt like an old married couple for the want of sleep alone. No one had wanted to be the very first to leave our merrymaking nuptial event; the fanfare festivities seemed never to end; all the commemoration was enough to kill the fatted calf twice over on our red letter day. We finally just up and left on our honeymoon at midnight of the fortnight when the full lunar light shined down on us gladly—Lord knows, we had waited long enough for that moment in our new marriage to come, for us party hardy souls.

Marriage is not exactly like the old married guys always say. Misery must love company so the seasoned veterans of wedlock gloss over the full real picture of things in a last ditch effort to gain new converts to the overly exaggerated blissful state of matrimony. I was a high spirited young man in those wily days of sowing my wild oats (I had every imaginable young man's ailment in those untamed days). I had to be tamed like a wild stallion or open ranged mustang horse. Miss Ella could have written a book on wedded bliss psychology; she had the good common sense to get the best times out of the worst moment.

Miss Ella never complained or howled loudly like so many redneck mammas do in our neck of the woods; a shrew of a wife never has respect or ever really gets what she wants out of life from other folks so my Miss Ella just planned fun things for us to do together and also with our best friends. We never had a dull moment with all our quiet fun that Miss Ella ramrodded. We were always on the go. And go was our middle name, especially in that brand spanking new Pontiac car of hers.

We were on the go to see all of Texas together. We drove all over Texas in that fancy Pontiac car of hers. We drove way out West onto the Great American Desert of West Texas where my old uncle and me had walked; I surely did enjoy riding in a breezy car much better than the long slow walking through the hot dust. We did not get to see all the crawly things in the desert sand up close. I did not miss the tarantulas and the hissing rattlesnakes. We did however eat snake steaks at the old restaurant now owned by the Irishman who still had the map of Ireland on his Celtic face; he though had added the table fare of chocolate covered baked potatoes for dessert on a popsickle stick and even had thick fried potatoe skins for snacks served like jerky—the gimmick slogan was "Desert Desserts on a Stick". Man, that old restaurant brought back almost forgotten memories. And the memories were best left forgotten, too. But my new wife and I drove onward on our honeymoon.

Our honeymmon took us farther across the West Texas desert and also moved much faster than my slow walk with Unck Scotty who walked to save money while we sped along to save time or to make timely moves. We were zooming to our manifest destiny on the path of life. We were making memories to last a lifetime and thus investing wisely in future lifelong experiences. My wife Miss Ella was one full blooded Scots who did not mind spending money, especially on me. We spent money like a drunk Indian or like we had it as my old mother would say. Finally, our fine new Pontiac auto reached the high elevated cap rock of West Texas. The radiator spewed over like a tea kettle at lunch time puffing away. We even later boiled beans in a cauldren cook pot on the side of the road while waiting for the car to cool down; the water boiled and foamed as the beans barely cooked—took over four hours just to cook the beans. The altitude or barometric pressure of the cap rock area on boiling water did not get together very well to cook our noon meal. Well, that Pontiac car cooled down long before the beans got cooked in their boiling stew pot. We finally et and then drove onward to the north boundard of Texas above Amarillo. Amberiller was how some folks said that place name back then. We had a splendid time visiting kinfoks and seeing the terrain full of dust devils or half-grown cyclons as Miss Ella nicknamed them. One dust devil wind storm did blow our way. We could not see a thing; visibility got down to zero and my eyes were about to mud over, never to see anything pretty good again. My new wife Miss Ella had a gritty taste on her tongue and looked like a walking fuzzy mud ball; she was mad as a wet hen, too, in that sudden sand storm. Miss Ella was all for going back to rainy wet East Texas real fast; she said that you never had mud high inside the house ceilings like all this dust gets into every crevice and into every pore of your skin. That dust storm was full of stifling air. We thus headed back for home, back to her fine old homeplace named Winniford Way. But we got ourselves all bumfuzzled or turned around in that blinding sand storm; we erraneously drove farther northward into the shallow waters of the Red River banks above Dumas where the infamous ding dong Texas daddies live. Those guys could play Texas style basketball in that devilish sand storm and never miss a hoop slam dunk shot. Of course, no one could observe any foul errors so the

true-blue Texan word was good enough for me under those dusty circumstances. The Ding Dong Daddies of Dumas had the only game in town, for those parts at least. We were too far removed from civilized population centers to care about elegant accommodations. Even a muddy basketball game was better than just sitting in a big Chieftian Pontiac automobile waiting for the smothering dust storm to go away. The wind storm came in spurts or gusts so we finally decided to drive slowly out of town.

Driving in a wind storm is not a fun thing to do, even for a salty old fun loving cyclone chasing guy like me. We got lost again; I was driving but laid the blame on Miss Ella since I allowed her to navigate the maps and also look at the fence posts to make sure we did not run off the road into them. That fine Pontiac car soon got stuck solid in the slap dab middle of the Red River going from Texas into the Oklahoma panhandle; we had again ended-up in the river bed shallow waters. The dust storm was worse and getting badder by the minute. I could not see my hand before my face but then I was not looking to find myself—I just wanted to find the roadway heading home to wet East Texas. I got out of the car to see what was happening; the water suddenly seemed to be deeper. But that was just mud; I was into mud up to my hips and going down. Yes, quicksand was all around us. The mud was so deep that we nearly lost that fancy Pontiac in the quicksand but some nearby Oklahoma red-man Indians came to our rescue when my wife Miss Ella shouted ever so loudly at the top of her lungs that her big Chief Pontiac was about to sink down into the murky drain. Cherokee Indians galore came out of the woodworks so to speak or from behind fallen tree trunks to lift that swell Pontiac car out of the muddy slime and carried it bodily back on shore to high ground on the Texas side boundary line of course. We never had no need or desire to leave Texas, except for that blinding sand storm. No true-blue Texan ever really needs to leave Texas to see anything else good or pretty in the world; we were just adversely turned around, really lost, by that dust devil of a blinding sand storm or we would not have been there. Anyway, those Cherokee Indians thought the real-live big Chief Pontiac himself was sinking with that new fangled car so they rescued the whole cabuddle. We thanked them in proper good Texan style which is a big toothy grinning smile and a heartfelt handshake to show real hospitality. They were our same kind of good people so we all left each other happy as could be. Miss Ella and I eagerly drove that muddy car homeward from the crimson waters of the West Texas shallow Red River bottoms. We had gotten the sand out of our eyes or else we had grown accustomed to it all. And too the wind storm had let up. We began to recognize landmarks beside the road on our way back to East Texas. We now only saw a very few armadillos.

The armadillo did not range very far onto the dry lands back then. The West Texas Amarillo area did not have a large armadillo animal population back then or even later till the hippie flower children generation of slap happy kids spread the armored plated mammals from tropic South Texas to all Texas points where the yippies camped. My wife Miss Ella and I travelled our way back on Highway 80 through Wichita Falls, where no namesake cascade of rivers exist, as we made our fast exit to Dallas.

Dallas was almost as good as being completely back home. Green grass and trees never looked so good to us. Dallas is the edge of East Texas where trees and rainfall finally begin to exist in abundant regularity. But North Texas begins at Denton above Dallas and goes upward to the Oklahoma border and then westward up through the Texas panhandle. This recent silly business of yankees calling everything above Houston where they migrated as North Texas is like

calling all United States citizens yankees who are in Europe when us good ole boy Southerners are never going to be good yankees to anyone anywhere or anyway, with all our rebellious confederate blood boiling at such dumb nomenclature from a yahoo yankee press at that. The East Texas domain is big and very well-know just like Upstate New York is not one town chartered spot; East Texas is three hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide; Tyler with its world famed roses is the blooming heart of East Texas as all well-drawn Texan demographics go. Well, I have had my Texan say-so and I do indeed feel better for it, too. North Texas is a good part of Texas to be from but it is not deep East Texas terrain ever.

East Texas has the most greenery in the world; more different forms or varied species of trees and plants proliferate in rainy East Texas than any where else in the whole wide world. Texas is in the middle of the Western hemisphere and thus has more genus types of flora and fauna living in the forests. And the tallest trees in the world do indeed grow in East Texas. The rain water of East Texas should be moved and sold west of Dallas as Fort Worth needs mucho-grande water on its Great American desert terrain plateau. Now, somehow, all that plentiful free East Texas rainfall needs to be directed to the dusty dry West Texas so I figured out a way to transport water from one side of Texas to the other far edge. I could do this great feat myself but only with the help of an ornery Texas tornado. I know that a funnel cyclone cloud can be relied on to suck-up water in soggy East Texas rivers such as when fish get rained down onto dry land farmers so I did some old fashioned Texan tornado foot racefunning around again like I used to do as a wild young man. I did again what I used to do so well. I ran up close to look that black funnel cloud in the face of Mother Nature's fury so I got chased like I knew that I would, being chased clear across dryland Texas by that rain sucker cloud mass.

That ornery mad as a wet hen tornado full of East Texas river bottom water pursued me like crazy; that rain storm had an avenging fury for my perky self all the way to Dallas from Texarkana on a moment's notice it seemed fast on my heels at that. It was a good thing that I could still run real fast like when I was much younger and had not forgotten my old timey skills. Well, that vengeful ill-natured funnel storm cloud routed me and its rain soaked load all the way to Fort Worth where I turned around exasperated to stick my tongue out just to rest. My old long-over-worked tongue nearly dragged itself raw like now from talking so much in the dusty streets of the smelly stockyards of cow town Fort Worth. That water-filled tornado funnel cloud was no match for me now; it was too soaked, soused itself so to speak with muddy river H₂O, to move as fast as it first did in our Texas foot race of the elements before it scooped-up more water to spout onto me in its humanized fury so I now truly had time to catch my winded breath. I had run all two hundred or so miles from Texarkana through Dallas without a pause. I surely did have more than I could say grace over now. In Fort Worth, the dust from my tired heels looked like a big storm itself; dirt was everywhere in the Texas air—dirty soil was settling on the ceilings inside all the houses per usual for a mere dust devil brought-in by me. As my sweetheart wife Miss Ella says that mud back in wet East Texas never got onto the high ceilings so rain storms beat the rusty-dusty dickens out of dust storms if you ever have to choose enduring one act of natural disaster over another tribulation. Well, that angry child-of-the-devil personified East Texas tornado chased me real fast suddenly with renewed vigor from the stockyards at Fort Worth since it had rested some to build-up its mean character, but that funnel cloud got misdirected from its usual tornado alley pathway out to the far West Texas desert countryside where cyclones now happen as a normal thing all the time since getting routed out there in the first place by me on a double dog dare by my niece Elsie Taylor Winniford of which she is another tall

tale for later. That full-grown cyclone fast on my heels must have fallen in puppy love with one of those small dust devil wind gusts and thus decided to go a'courting often to see those cute little miniature funnel clouds to get some windy action going for a change out there on the desert. I must have shown the storm system too well how to rampage westward all the far distance to ole Wichita Falls so cyclones now know how to find their pathway onto the far desert simply because I first led them that way. Those cyclone storms are called an act of God so I don't get blamed for them, thank goodness. I am truly sorry for that tragedy of storms wrecking desert life to havoc but some price has to be paid for having big rain clouds and lots more of good life-giving rain water on the drylands.

Anyway, the rainstorm that I got to chase me westward onto the desert ended-up staying full time as a new lake in West Texas. All that precious water being siphoned from East Texas rivers became a West Texas lake called Possum Kingdom. All that captured East Texas rain water poured down flat as a cow wetting on that desert mesa canyon rock to leave a vast super lake formation on the high dry plains of the desert. I would never do this again for any reason; I had rather dig a canal deep into the small rivers from East Texas out onto the desert plateau. And I am too meek and humble a Texan to take credit for this creation, but all my friends and close relatives know the full truth about my climatic accomplishments that even formed a West Texas lake since all my branch water kin to half of Texas knows the complete facts anyway.

Another Texas lake that was taylor-made by my family is Caddo Lake in deep East Texas. It runs in the Taylor family for us to fool around with water sports. My grandfather Madison Maxwell Monroe Taylor made that Caddo Lake when he was newly wed and all in the olden days. Caddo Lake to this day has the most unusual fish life in Texas. Salt water cat fish abound in the briny waters of that far inland East Texas lake. Everything in Texas is different from anything else like it in the whole wide world because us Texans can't help but improve on an already good thing when seeing it; our natural curiosity just out-bests everything full of wonder; and our creative genius to advance matters just takes over. Well, my ole grandpappy 3-M as folks called him decided to build hisself a really big house on his twenty-thousand acre spread or farm; he cut down huge cherry trees that grew wild in the Big Thicket forest which extended all the way down from Houston up to Texarkana back then and even over to Paris, Texas. Trees were so thick and wide that horses could hardly ride through them (you absolutely could not see the forest for the trees back then). The old 3-M Taylor pioneer homestead just north of Winnsboro was appropriately named Cherrywood; his new petite bride was a fiesty Pennsylvania-Dutch gal who was as workbrittle as my own new wife Miss Ella. My small statured grandmaw Miz 3-M was a slip of a girl, no bigger than a wash-in-the-soap. This itty-bitty Taylor lady decided to do something as grande and out-of-this-world as her husband's fine estate house was; she dug a hole nearly the size of Texas and all-get-out for a cistern to store her drinking water. They had both already dug two other good sized cisterns at the house porches or verandahs to catch fresh clear rain water, and then the barn cisterns had been easy enough for her to dig alone. But grandmaw wanted to dig a really big deep cistern for the irrigation of the cotton fields in the hot summer time when even good old East Texas does not get enough rain to grow decent crab grass. Well, my grandmaw Taylor was known as Miz 3-M because she worked beside her man and nobody could tell who did the most or best work—at least nobody was talking about their job of work back then. Grandpaw's helpmate had decided to do the finishing touches on the twelve bedroom house so they could have a lot of kids to populate those big rooms and then get me born so that I could tell this old timey Texan tale

about true grit workers to you folks. But it took both grandmaw and grandpaw Taylor together to dig a trench the size of a Texas river to divert the water flow and then grandmother took a pick axe to go much deeper. That old gal dug for months and must have gone plum nearly to China; she did hit some old Chinese artifacts and to this day they are in our house. We do have a lot of Chinese antiques that floated upward from the depths of her vast digging. All that deep hole in the East Texas ground finally caved in on that poor lady. She lost her balance and fell backwards far away from the engulfing hole or else I would not be here to tell all the events so well. This Texas size hole in the ground just kept growing or swelling like a gopher snake eating the dirt for lunch around itself; that whole end of East Texas began to sink and to sag. That giant sink-hole finally became lower than sealevel on the far Galveston coastline side. And then the salt water from the Texas gulf flowed backwards and upward into deep East Texas rivers to bring tons of marine life inland with a huge tidal wave that was sweeping up the old winding lazy East Texas estuaries. The Big Thicket forest trees even got washed down into that sink-hole that finally filled up with enough water and today that is why so much salt water cat fish marine life abounds in deep East Texas Caddo Lake. Now, some educated fools of geologists like to teach that an earthquake of the Madera fault era in 1815 to 1819 really caused all that freaking formation. But I do know better for a fact that the whole ruckus of salt water flowing backwards into the Caddo Lake was actually caused by my grandmother Miz 3-M Taylor—maybe, she also caused the earth to shake or have a heart attack to form into an earthquake. I don't doubt my grandmaw's capabilities and neither should you. And besides, I always say that anything is possible in Texas because God is the original Texan since he lives here in the heart of everyone of us good Texans and thus made us the way we are. Texans always have had a fiesty God given nature.

The fiesty climate of Texas never ceases to amaze even me. About the time you get it figured out, it gets bigger and better. Nothing common and ordinary ever happens in Texas. Absolutely nothing stereotypical normal happens here in Texas. The Big Thicket forest is living proof of that fact; the best orchids in the world grow wild in that tree infested place and my old eccentric uncle Scotty Taylor still lives somewheres in all that wooded place just waiting to do business with you. But the tallest trees in the world actually do grow in the Big Thicket forest of East Texas or South East Texas as some dare say (Houston is where South Texas begins, though). The tall trees are all over the place just for the looking if you care for such things. The lumberjack in the Big Thicket has to be the busiest axeman in the world or else have the best chain saw on the planet just to cut a benchmark line around the really big East Texas trees. Big Thicket trees grow so tall that no one person can ever climb to the very tip top. And only a real Texan by birth can even attempt to climb a Texas grown tree, kinda like jack and the bean stalk story except in Texas. The Big Thicket trees grow very tall because they need lots of sunlight and must reach far upward just to get out of the ordinary treeline so their height is indeed enormous. I though did cut down a Texas tall pine tree once that was not the biggest but was very close to being the greatest one ever. When I yelled timber, the tree fell for three weeks or so it seemed before it hit the ground—the tip top branches however landed all the way up north in New York City; it was Christmas time so that made no noticeable difference to them New Yorkers. Them northerners just thought it was all part of the yule tide seasonal decorations. Now, that was

an extra big tree. I cut down that big tree close to Texarkana; the tree roots grew in Texas but cast a shadow on the whole state of Arkansas and Louisiana or Lousyana as my redneck buddies usually say it. All that shade from big tall East Texas Big Thicket trees cause so many bayous and marsh land areas in the state of Louisiana. Texas big trees influence the whole world let me tell you.

Big Texas trees even grow in the middle of the flowing Red River or at least did grow in the center of the crimson waters of our north-eastern boundary. Just above Texarkana, which is the Gateway to the Southwest, there was a log jam for generations caused literally by eager beavers. The beaver animals built their dam homes that almost stopped the upper flow on the Red River. The logs from the truly tall Texas trees bridged the whole riverway. And then new seedlings took root in the pine bark mulch where they grew in a new forest thirty to fifty feet tall all across the top of the water. Texarkana became a corporate town and gateway to the whole southwest soon after the log jam was dynamited to smithereens by the new railroad tycoons who had developed trade routes through the primeval forests of East Texas. My own daddy George Washington Taylor helped unclog the log jam so I got this story fairly straight from the horse's mouth so to speak just like I am telling you now. The original old Big Thicket forest extended all the way down to Victoria and up to Paris above Commerce to the east and of course all the way across to Texarkana. That is how big the primeval forest of old timey East Texas really was.

My old daddy George Washington Taylor was born on February 22, hence, his namesake so he could not tell a lie either about anything Texas. My old daddy was a trailblazer guide for folks from Texas going into Indian Territory; he knew the good old Indian chiefs themselves back then and knew the lay of the land like the back of his hand. My daddy was trying to find a lost gold mine. Prospecting for gold in Oklahoma Territory was my daddy's real purpose for going in the first place. My dad found everything except gold after he left Texas soil. His Texas luck was fast going back home. My father did meet the last of the great old timey Oklahoma Indian medicine men named Wovera who had walked the Trail of Tears as a boy. My ole daddy became a good friend to that fine medicine man. Wovera predicted many things; he foretold that on the adjoining lands of the Caddo Tejas or friendly folks's border of his Redman lands came together that a huge lake would be formed to serve the needs of both nations; now Lake Texoma is half in each state—the medicine man Wovera delivered his prophetic messages generations prior to the actual event so my old daddy just keeps retelling his old experiences. And now Texas today has the magical waters of an Indian soothsayer come true. Today, that large Lake Texoma is located above Sherman and thus truly is a North Texas marine harbor at the tip top edge of good ole North Texas skirting East Texas.

East Texas timber was used to build many things in early Texas besides houses and railroad ties. Wooden derricks in the Texas oil fields from 1901 Splendletop required East Texas timbers. My ole daddy built wooden derricks in the pioneer Texas oil fields from 1901 till 1932 when he retired to attend night college at East Texas State University at Commerce. All those old timey oil patch derricks were truly Taylor-made from whence the banner phrase "Taylor-made" originated as a world-wide trademark of where my family kinsmen artisans had labored—now, I would never tell you no lies. My Scots folks always went wherever a fast buck was to be made, especially the black gold garden variety type of opportunity. My ole dad was truly a chip off the old

Taylor-made block, just like great-uncle Scotty was so enterprising to turn a dollar when no one else could. My dad was so good at doing his job in the oil patch that he built one derrick to serve two or even three depths of wells on the same spot of ground—those dual pumping rigs to this day are called Christmas trees since he built them out of East Texas timbers to resemble Big Thicket pine trees. I like to share the wild tales about my daddy's old timey escapades because younger folks must not break faith with the past generational accomplishments by not honoring their memory with personal stories—kinda like old home-week of memorabilia. Now, my old dad was no joker like me so that is the gospel truth as any good preacher man would not lie either about such a serious matter as this for fear of lightning striking his untruthful lips.

Truth is the mainstay of all us Taylor-made kinsmen. We could not lie if we really wanted to because it shows on our honest-to-goodness bright face when we even exaggerate facts plus Miss Ella has become my truth syrup barometer. She just rolls her eyes heavenwardly when I barely overestimate the detailed truth or embroidery the facts. I can't tell a lie in her sweet presence; I don't even try. The truth is an obsession with that woman of mine. We make an ideal pair. But a Texan had rather be right than president—we are never truly wrong. I once thought I was wrong but I took it back real fast. I might josh myself but I would never who-raw you as my good old daddy would say about kidding a kidder. My wife Miss Ella was a good sport to put-up with me and all the Taylor kin. She and I though have always travelled through life smelling the flowers all along the way; we don't turn our noses up at folks like we just smelled a pile of dung as so many people go through life with a scrunched nasal passage showing on their hickey face. Smelling the flowers has been our aim; we look for the good, even blooming idiots are sweet children of God's gift to see how well-off we are. I like seeing and finding the good smelling things in life. The Big Thicket especially has so many wild flowers in full bloom—orchids in the forest were a joy to see and to take vistas of pictures. My sweetheart Miss Ella and I took short trips to every part of Texas; we had no favorite places. All of Texas is so much fun and so good to travel around that we just kept on going forward to experience all we could. In East Texas Athens, we frequently ate at the drugstore lunch counter where the world famous hamburger was invented and then taken to the 1894 World's Fair in Chicago to demonstrate the good Texan ingenuity to the rest of the planet who aped our ways.

Texan genius comes naturally to our big land of opportunity. The climate is so hot in the long heated summers that the brain power really gets to going full steam ahead. Ingenius ideas do come into the Texan brain power when the temperature is high, not low, so a hot shower from head to toe will also generate ingenius ideas during the horrid cold winter months; thus, a cold shower kills all passionate ideas from heading into troubled waters as preachers urge the youth to indulge; and I should know from having taken so many. Go soak your head is not just a rawhiding or who-rawing joke but is good advice to go stimulate some good Texas thinking processes, for as you know Texans are good at being able to improve everything anyway. I am a good example of all this Texas lore as my good wife Miss Ella will attest.

Miss Ella is a good wife and has kept me on the good pathway of life for over fifty years now. She gave me everything good in this life; she gave me

an even better improved extended family than I already had; Miss Ella was my whole family of love—she gave me a wonderful Taylor-made baby after two years of wedded bliss Texas style. Our honeymoon travels were just too good to stop reveling in ourselves and thus take time to have a child so our baby-making had to wait a long time just to get birthed at the right time for us. I had thought the fetus would be full grown before the delivery date finally arrived. Now, this is no lie or tall Texas tale; our first born had to wait so long to get borne two years after we were married that our firstborn baby girl came into this world with teeth already cut and a full head of hair to boot. We Texans get more bite into matters at date of birth than other folks. After all, a Texas baby is far more advanced than other nationalities. That infant girl of mine was the spitting image of me; we were like two peas in a pod. My little gal even said she was a daddy's girl and her first words were, "I am Tom's girl." Now, no lie about my baby girl—would I ever prevaricate in the rhetorical sense? My baby daughter Lynna Estelle Taylor became a tom-boy who went everywhere with me and talked a blue streak to strangers if she ever saw one. That little girl of mine had the gift of gab from the blarney stone more than I even did, if you can imagine such a thing.

My little Taylor girl favored both sides of the houses; she looked very much like all the Taylor kin with our palaver, and yet she was a Winniford too with their bone structure. She had the Winniford knowledge knot birthmark bump on the back of her head which was full of extra smarts so she never forgot a thing as part of that heritage so we had to be careful what was said around that little "unforgettable" girl. But kids can be a ring tail tutor; they change their parents lives completely and forever at that. Never will parents have personal freedom or complete privacy anymore. When little tykes step on your toes, the hurt is momentary; but when grown, they walk all over your heartstrings that is never forgotten. Yet, they do it all with love knots. A person can never pay for their own raising until they have to rear a child of their own—the curse of the Irish life upon you is what my Irish mother called having to pay for your raising. Now, my mamma had the spirit of the fighting Irish reincarnate deep in her veins indeed. (Bad parenting shows when these young liberated mothers and fathers want independent children so that everyone can go their separate ways—the offspring leave the nest soon enough so what is twenty years out of personal freedom to rear the next generation?). 'Tis no wonder that the word "mother" has become the meanest cuss word in our language. But the fathers often show the meanest unconcern. And some of my raunchy ornery friends said that they only liked children in the liquid state so I told them to go soak their gutter snipe minds in a cess pool; these vulgar nasty-minded dingle-butt rascals give truly good ole Texan boys a bad name everywhere to live down. A real Texas father has to stand-up to defend his sweet daughter's honor and good name even at an early age—the father of daughters has to get in good practice for later when the sneaky good-for-nothing yahoo boyfriends start courting your innocent little girl.

My little baby girl was the cuties of all, of course—"my little crow baby was the blackest" so to speak. She learned to do readings at public gatherings by age three and she was as cute as movie star Shirley Temple ever was. My daughter would also improvise her own witty sayings or readings such as when passing a vacant corner lot, she would say, "Hush Little Corner, don't you cry, you will be a filling station bye-and-bye." And she did an impromptu

piece of expression entitled "Brother Jones, you take a tator and wait." That original scenario was a true episode about children having to sit at the second table of big family dinners and then take left over food. My gal surely had the blarney stone stuck to her lips and also had the gall to speak her own mind. I done told you that my little gal was cute as a bug's ear. My little girl was smart as could be and sharp as a sack of rocks in a race riot; she was a walking and talking baby book storehouse of encycloepedic information. She did us proud all the time, let me tell you.

Being proud of our Taylor-made children is normal and thus my niece Elsie Taylor Winniford was full of it too for her little girl Ida Margaret Winniford but in an odd sort of way. Elsie though did not want the constant worry and time consuming problem to raise her baby child so she took her new daughter back home to her old mother Ida Salmon Taylor to raise in Commerce town, a few miles away from the grandeur of Winniford Way homestead with its high stepping party animals. Elsie was too busy going to jovial parties and being a festive rich bitch or jollity dancing fool at local gala events to stay home with a crying child. And besides convivial high society was always hanging around Sam Winniford who was the finest violinist in Texas and he still played for presidents of the United States so his celebrity status had rubbed-off just enough to give Miss Elsie, the-new-in-law, a big head. And this attitude was fast making her an out-law family member. Elsie did not want to take the time to do baby disapers while she could boogie all over Texas and Washington, D.C. Seeing baby Ida Margaret for a few hours each week was more than enough for the high flying Miss Elsie. Now, my wife Miss Ella who was a genuine bona fide Winniford by birth did not approve such child neglect and thus made no bones about such flagrant abuse of one's motherly duties. We soon parted ways as being mutual party goers, an end to our camaraderie. We were no longer the beautiful chummy-clubby duet couple at jovial celebrations; we certainly did not take undue risks with Elsie anymore with her double-dog-dare urbanity. Our commonly shared good times were no more. Miss Elsie was not our cup of Taylored motherhood loving tea. Elsie lived a life-lie of jolly glory road falsified good-times. We were off her like a wet shirt. My wife Miss Ella and I were interested in down home things now. This intimate family life schism existed until my niece and sister-in-law both rolled-up into one kinfolk mess went to church and got religion to proclaim her redemption or reformation on the mourner's bench a few years later during the Great Depression when nobody had any spare money to go anywhere anyway—then, we all had to forgive and forget as good Christians. But that is another long story.

The story of my life is doing down home things. And we finally had a second child to fill our homely ways. Miss Ella knew that she had to have four children in order to fulfill God's dictum to replenish and multiply—replenish is having two children and multiply means two more babes so four is the magical Christian duty even for Protestants. Preachers do indeed rule the lives of their parishners with their college gained facts of what the translated scriptures really mean as they are quick to point-out; they don't want you to just read the Bible for yourself and thus know only what is stated—the hidden meanings of the ancient verb forms and double entendre words make the Bible Church preacher's job indispensible and God-given to hear them tell it. Well, Miss Ella and I had three miscarriages when our second child finally survived—our Christian faith was being tested saith the ministers of God's ordained will.

Well, we had a God-sent boy who was borne with the decayed black flesh of his dead twin in his mouth. My son had white hair and blue eyes till age seven when both turned dark brown. That baby boy was born at home of course during a blizzard in late February; a week of warm spring-like weather had just preceded that snow storm so we were not quite ready for the ordeal a minute after midnight. A few weeks later, a tornado hit home; the roof was lifted-off like a doll house being played with. The storm dunking rain drenched all the weighty interior walls to unglue the wallpaper that then fell in streaks across the furniture; next, the peaked roof was replaced carefully as though being handled by a giant over-seer into the same nail holes—evangelists later interpreted our woe by sermonizing that the Lord Himself directed the handling of this act of God nature-event simply to show us His powerful presence in our mortal lives (fearsome Bible thumpers or hell-fire damnation preachers saith too much sometimes on behalf of the good silent Lord with Free Will taking a back seat to current theology till Judgement Day comes in the end of the last millennium to claim us all for sure as Revelation 20 promises). Those fatalistic fear-teaching clergyman can go to grass for all I care since I can read for myself what goodness the true-good-book Bible says, not just trials and tribulations for us Christians. My sweet wife Miss Ella saw it all, experiencing all the ripping asunder and then putting back together of the fine old homestead named Winniford Way in a split second during that cyclone windstorm so I do believe her eye witness account, not a lambasting pastor. My good wife don't never lie and she was sick in bed, too ill from child bearing complications, to go to the safe confinement of the storm cellar shelter.

I had to be the one to take my children to the storm shelter and leave my courageous wife Miss Ella inside that big house alone; the baby stayed quiet only when I held him and my darling daughter was never afraid when her daddy was along, even though he was scared silly, so Miss Ella had promised that if we were in safety that she could then bear the awful burden—mind over matter kept us calmly safe since all good Texans know the Lord helps those who help themselves, and this stressful day was time enough to make a praying man out of anyone during a windstorm. Everything turned dark-thirty, pitch black in the middle of the afternoon. Tornadoes have always liked to pursue my whereabouts because of my chasing all those funnel clouds as a half-grown boy just to get away from the claustrophobic confines of a stuffy storm cellar so I knew that I was in for a long haul of it. And now I was trapped by promises and duty into enduring the cellar shelter confines to sooth my worried wife and scared little children—it was time to put on the waiting clothes for a long frightening session down in a hell hole deep in the ground. I was the odd man chosen one who would have preferred staying in the middle room of the rambling, lumbering old house in the great rampaging outdoors even with a howling young cyclone on the make. Life always has an ironic twist working in God's mysterious ways to cause one's worst fears to come true at the least expected moment. And God ain't no sadist enough to do ugly devilment according to the one-true Bible I read, so the good Lord does not interfere to change daily life commotions or ever interrupt His predestined scheme of things for the long run of eternity.

That infernal spring storm seemed to last an eternity while I was down in that black hell hole of a storm cellar. But I was well addressed for the dire emergency with God's full name of religious lamentations on everyone's tongue. We finally got over the holy-terror scare and got back to living our lives according to the good Book dictates among our nest of relatives. Times were hard and then economics got much harder. The Great Depression was in full swing when

my baby boy got born; he was one great big accident to our depressed child birth plans. We then just had one more big loud mouth to feed, now that the national big money banks had closed. But worst of all, permanently and forever more, my wife's family private bank was busted flat broke, not worth a plugged nickle anymore. We were all now flat broke, with no good prospects. My lucrative roofing company had folded first—the really bad economic bust years of 1929 lasted till 1939. The heart of the Great Depression was 1934, and Miss Ella and I were still having children. A tornado death would thusly have been a blessing in disguise right then and there, plus a great relief for all the suffering worrywart things that we had to endure all through the terrible or thrifty-dust-bowl 1930's. Work was not available for able-bodied men, even a crafty Taylor-made guy like me. I was called shiftless and doo-less by some of my fine relatives until they themselves no longer had jobs or real prospects as well. Times were bad for everybody, even the rich were poor for a change.

Poor mouthing became the game of the day. And the nights were full of constant anguish and sleepless thrashing. My children were the only joy during the whole dreadful depression. The little tykes were the only good fortune that Miss Ella and I had left. Our little boy was a refreshing burst of unexpected truthful remarks all the time. He spoke his mind clearly like an old testament prophet straight out of the BOOK OF JUDGES. Truth was built into that little boy of mine like God's own judgement come true. That boy had all the good traits of both me and my sweetheart wife Miss Ella, plus a few of my real bad points. My son spoke only the absolute truth but at the most inopportune times or when the most social embarrassment would occur. Now, that's when you know you done been got by the factual truth of it all in such a bright eyed and bushy-tailed sort of way.

Speaking the truth was so typically Texan of my little boy. My son acknowledged that one did not need to tell lies about your enemies because the selective use of honest facts in biding time can eventually be used to put a haughty person in their deserved place—that's the kind of savory truth-sayer my little Texan boy was, slick as owl's grease, he was. My boy got his sweet licks of revenge through the abiding use of selective truth dooses put on the pious holy-rollier-than-thou fanatics, exposed right there before God and everybody by a little ever so innocent boy. But high faluting rich folks don't like to hear the whole truth. We had to get out of town more than once because of this honest trip approach to life by our little son. We finally had to move to the Big Thicket forest to get away from influential rich folks who resented hearing the complete truth even from the mouth of babes. You know, people get their feelings hurt if you tell them the whole truth, especially about obvious common little every day things.

My little son just rattled on and on about his observations of a person on his hit list and just did not seem to take no notice if the truth hurt them or not, acting like everything was still just hunky-dorey while they squirmed. My boy always started his most telling truth search with his favorite adopted narrative hook with a disarming jab, "Let me tell you a question." He simply didn't give a flip about their flip-flop attitudes or rationalized approach to real facts. And let me tell you that my little boy's sincere honesty of truth-saying was enough to drive a good grown man to drink or so I rationalized. I thus began to swig the hooched white lightning moon madness drink again since I had no other local luxuries to indulge. I also did imbibe the national beer of Texas back then when I could get the funds for a long necking good time. That son of mine talked a blue streak and related everything in exact detail as he heard or saw it happen.

He had a photographic mind that bordered on the obscene or pornographic gain said one of many skin-flint preachers who had been scathed by his honest speaking tongue. I always left the gossip sessions high and dry early when it was raining slander since I had-on a thin -skinned suit. I also wisely avoid trashing someone in public when every old coot is out to clean house by revealing skeletons in the family closet of their closest friends who are not currently present. I know better than to out-stay my welcome at the favorite gossip watering hole, for they can hardly wait to speak ill of me when I leave. 'Tis as well, when I know nothing good to say--and it all is on me--I just get out of town or out of ear shot so to speak far away from my close-knit kissing cousins loud mouthed cackling over my misfortunes.

Well, a close kissing cousin of mine unfortunately died so my little son told it all like it really was, the whole goary hog washed truth. The cousin Sherry was chunky or a chuffy girl, a real hefty gal, who ideally met my standards of classic beauty since I like the big busted plump Rubensian woman with real meat on her bones. Anyway, Sherry went to a spa in Dallas or a fat farm as my boy called it rightly--so when he related the tragic events later but ever so truthfully detailed. Naturally, the reference "fat farm" did not set well with the portly-set who had money to burn and wanted not at all to hear the big-fat-truth from an innocent child's lips so they naturally thought that I put words in his mouth with "fat farm" and all being so trendy phrased beyond a child's experience. I, red-faced but full of keen interest, tried to shut-up his flowing fountain of truth syrup in the name of common family decency but to no avail. I also wanted to stay on his good side--and besides I liked hearing what he dished out so easily to all the mealy mouthed kinfolks who had so recently called me a lazy bum until they got permanently unemployed or had only work in a low rent job--to see them convulsed, squirming in truthful throes that will break them of sucking eggs at the expense of others. Revenge is indeed sweet when you don't have to do anything yourself to see it happen. Well, I always tried to keep on the good side of my honest-bright young son as I have said before. But his other side was just more of the same old truth telling turn of events. Cousin Sherry was so fat as a hog, continued telling my little son, that she rolled out of bed and one of her two hundred pound arms flopped onto her face to smother herself to death right on the spot. As if that tragedy is not bad enough to tell as truth but poor sweet Sherry was so large that there was only one casket in America big enough to hold her carcass. The funeral director had to call like crazy all over the country to find a metal box strong enough to hold all that half-ton of human flesh. Each arm and leg weighed two hundred pounds so a steel coffin box had to be bought just to barely sustain carrying the corpse to the nearby cemetery. And my son said that every flabby ounce barely fit into that steel burial box. She ran a close second to being the heaviest person in the world but who was setting any old Ginn's World Book records at this crucial time? The poor dear cousin was only age twenty when she smothered herself to death accidentally. Telling this brutal painful truth is not a pleasure for sure. Everyone nowadays hearing this true tale says this fat lady story is a broad faced lie so non-fiction is indeed stranger than truth to twist a famous author's saying. But maybe someday soon every doubting Thomas will wake-up dead like this to learn this truth the hard way.

The Taylor told truth is often unbelievable. I should know since I have been telling truly big whoppers for years. I even once took first prize at the Dallas State Fair for lying but they made me put it back! And that is the unadulterated truth. That moment of truth is enough veracity to last a lifetime or enough to make me turn to white lightning drink again for sure.

The best home brew drinking in the whole wide world happens around the Big Thicket forestlands. The local demand far exceeds the big-shot citified Houston marketplace demands for the good ole John Barleycorn liquid of refreshment. A deep snort of that white mule juice will knock you back a month of sundays in time for sure about whatever is ailing you. Folks down there in the Big Thicket can make moonshine all day long without fear of ever being caught by the federal revenue agents because the tall trees cast a shade like nightfall most of the lengthy daytime to hide their whereabouts from the close eyeballing of any unwanted operators or up-coming deputies. No stark stranger can find an easy wayward path in or out, so revenue officers and the high sheriff of Liberty County even do not stand a chinaman's chance to catch a local good ole boy making good hard-likker booze. A good liquod still was not easy to come-by even in my day so I minded my p's and q's when stepping around the mason jar stash on strange ground through the Big Thicket bootleggers territory. Man, oh man, did I ever mind my own business so that I did not get into unwelcome troubled waters with the John Barleycorn bigwigs. I just never did tell my little boy about all this good stuff going-on in the deep woods, or he would have had a field day spilling the beans better than a so-called lie detector testing machine ever could in a court of law catch a bald faced liar. Everybody, including me, with a super duper secret was running scared as all get out anyway from my little boy so night time hunting sport events was the best lamebrain excuse to use for getting away from the family and thus go into a tizzy for a bender on the local red eye. Tis no wonder that good ole boys to this day like to go a coon hunting so often late at night in certain parts of the great Texas outdoors. I was always traipsing through the woods after the good stuff. And I always managed to live not far from where I could get the best dram in the whole state of Texas.

We lived for a spell—I might add a mighty long dry spell—near Hardin where my oldest sister Opal was a big social club woman; her husband was high sheriff of the county and a mighty good man for sniffing out any illegal action in the far hinterland reaches of his bailiwick. He was a religious man, Quaker by birth-right, so he had eternal goodness written all over his big Pennsylvania Dutchman face. Victor Shauburger was the nicest man in the world till you got him angry or did him wrong; he and my little boy got along just fine. That youngin of mine went everywhere with his Uncle Vic who used him like a fine bird dog to sniff out the liars and cheats of the county. They made an awesome pair like two peas in a pod that kept close tabs on every old skin flint in the whole countryside, to put every ole lout on the run. Those two paragons patrolled the local district real estate like personified watchdogs of Justice and Liberty forever on the go. I do think that my young son loved that officious Unk of his even better than me. But I was glad, almost surely relieved, that those two pure of heart souls had found each other. They never gave a rest to the pursuit of truth in the Texas eminent domain on the edge of the Big Thicket. And they did it in unspeakable style.

Their truth serum patrol, so to speak, took custody of the local roadways in one of ole Victor Shauburger's new Buick automobiles. He owned several auto agencies as well as saw mills and farms—his Buick cars had customized noisy horns that honked the words "Better Buy Buick" all over the highways of Southeast Texas. Victor's Nash, Terraplane, Hudson, Packard and Studebaker dealerships were as spectacular. Ask me no questions and I will tell you no lies about my kinfolks in that neck of the woods. Sister Opal was even listed in Marquis's WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN WOMEN. And my dear elder sister was such a big wig that no one could keep-up with her, including herself. She met herself coming and going in her typical Texas chic style. She was head and shoulders ahead of everybody, even me.

My big sis Miss Opal was queen of Liberty County Big Thicket country. Opal had once been down-and-out at the heels dirt poor during the flamboyant wealthy Flapper Days of the roaring 1920's when I gladly took my poor sister and her little daughter Loretta under my wing back in our hometown Commerce that my dad and three uncles had helped found; I bought school books, clothes and whatever was needed during those hard times days of theirs with no thought of a need to ever return those loving kindness days to me. And now the times were a changing, reversed all bad onto me. I was presently the poor relations of the Taylor family clan. My poor wife Miss Ella and I lived a low key life in the Big Thicket during the improvident Great Depression decade years.

My sweetheart wife and I kept a low profile lifestyle because we were swamp trash poor during that awful Great Depression which lasted a full decade. Some folks in the swamp lands did not know what was really going-on in the poor outside world. The Great Depression did not exist for them because some were even to poor to know or notice the difference of indigent needs during the wealthy high stepping flapper days and the current impoverished times of the 1930's, just seemed like old home week to them again for sure. Many of those poor hard-working functional illiterate folks did not even know the exact year, much less the decade or the century; these friendly kind souls thought Abe Lincoln was yet alive and still presiding in the White House. Man, it do take a long time for the real word to reach all through the Big Thicket forest lands or environs; and that's no big fib—would I lie to you even if I could? And that is what I liked best about the folks there when I lived among them; they don't even try pretending to know every thing about everyone in the whole big wide world like some high-hatted know-it-alls today put-on airs. Folks living in the Big Thicket did not need riches and puffed-up finery to live well or to be big-ikkey. We had everything we really needed and then some. I did not earn much money cash flow in the Big Thicket economy nor did I need many earthly possessions to sport about. Folks helped each other without intent of idle gain, even my stingy-gut old Uncle Scotty assisted his neighbors in time of dire need.

Uncle Scotty helped other folks who could not get work but were willing to labor in his latest business ventures. My old uncle from Scotland was still living in his home-away-from-outdoor-home deep down in the paradise wetlands of the Big Thicket. Old Unk had been living hidden away deep in the marshy swamps of the Big Thicket forest lands just waiting for opportunity to come his way again like it always seemed to do by ordained predestination in a good Presbyterian way right on divine schedule.

Opportunity came naturally to the Big Thicket country. No able-bodied man went hungry or needed to. Lots of food was available just for the taking or the skillful hunting. Hound dogs hunted coons with a natural vengeance. Pelts even brought a good price to keep the cash flow going. And, besides, the good eating of the coon meat filled many a depression haunted belly. Coonskin caps were seen all over that end of Texas on the best of heads. I was in the thick of things with the best coon dogs in the world.

I owned two of the finest Texas bred hunting hounds in all of the Big Thicket. Those coon dogs of mine were named Bosco and Rosco. Those prize hounds got their namesakes from the best two real live whiskey makers in the Big Thicket so when I yelled those dogged monikers loudly to the wild winds, then I was really just yelping for my favorite bootleggers Rosco and Bosco in the woodlands without ever calling undue attention to that pair of distillery locations.

As I said before, that pair were the best trained coon dogs in the whole wide world. I had those canines so well trained that all I had to do was pick-up a kitchen chair which needed a new flat bottom and thus show those smart dogs where a fine furry stretched coonskin should fit. Those dogs then joyously ran to fetch a real live coon to fill the hole and in a couple of hours they would be back with a good catch even with the right color tone coordinated interior match. Now, that is no exaggeration or my name ain't Tom Taylor! But one busy day, my sweetheart wife Miss Ellabrought her ironing board to be repaired out to my work-bench when I got time from all my good coon hunting. Those two zealous sleeping hounds awoke about that same time to look their sad eyeballs into that huge frame work of boards; they began yelping like the dickens had been kicked out of them, and they ran-off—to this day, I have never seen hide nor hair of Rosco or Bosco again. Good coon dogs like them are hard to come-by so I just know for sure that those hounds are to this day out searching everywhere in the Big Thicket woods all over for the great-granddaddy of big coons to fit that large ironing board cover. I just hope that no ill luck comes to those fine dogs of mine as I know for certain they will return just as surely as tomorrow will become today when they finally catch the biggest coon of all. I just hope no panthers attack my lost dogs—now, that would for sure break them of sucking eggs.

Wild panthers roamed all over the inner sanctum of the Big Thicket back in my day or late nights. Good coon dogs like mine have been known to tree a panther or die trying. Panthers scream a lot in the dead of night so we hunters stayed far away from such dangerous noise most of the time. But not all of the Big Thicket is dangerous. Lots of native growing plants cover the forest floor like a good salad just waiting to be picked. All this good eating was free, too. Polk salad was just part of the tender vegetation all over the place.

The salad vegetation also provided a good place for the biggest edible bugs in the world. The biggest cockroaches could be put to good use or turned into financial gain by none other than my old Unk Scotty. My old Unk Scotty had already beat the world to the punch by selling carmel covered cockroaches as a unique delicacy or gourmet food. He called his newest company "La Cockaroacha, The National Food of Texas." Golly, that old Scotsman could jump the gun on money-making ideas before the rest of the world even thought about doing it or knew they needed such epicurian delights; he was ahead of his time by leaps and bounds. And my old uncle had cash paying customers let me tell you—folks ate those chocolate covered bugs, just as sure as there are hookers on South Main Street in Houston. Rich people need diversions from their leisure so the chocolate covered bon-bons with cockroaches and/or ants provided just the right touch to forgetting the horrid Great Depression busted days. Lots of rich folks lived in the Big Thicket, and by choice too. So, not everyone was poor ignorant folks like myself. My brother-in-law Sheriff Victor Shauberger was very rich, but he did not have leisure time to eat La Cockaroachas since he was busy marshalling or sherifing all of Liberty County. But the wealthiest citizen of all was Mrs. Humphreys.

Mrs. Humphreys was a life-long native; her maiden surname was Hardin for whom the town Hardin was founded. And John Wesley Hardin was part of her long genealogical keith and kin; John Wesley Hardin's wife was a Taylor also—that made us somehow branchwater kin since bloody genes is thicker than rain water in the wash of time eternal. The founding Hardin family had settled on 625 sections or 400,000 acres and then the other settlers founding family Humphreys had also pioneered Texas with a Spanish landgrant of equal acreage. Thus, that old lady

owned almost half—or so it all seemed when walking across her vast timberlands and endless rice paddies within the Big Thicket swampy land mass on her personal inherited 800,000 acres and four oilfields. She was rich beyond Croesus's wildest dreams, even though she was no King Ranch truly big-rich heiress with a capital K million acres. That old lady Humphreys had the Midas touch for sure with a regular twenty-six million dollar oil royalty check every quarter for her black gold dividend rights during the middle of the Great Depression (or was it a monthly check? All of that high finance was out of my league, way out in left field, far from my depth). She even owned her own individual private natural gas well piped right into her two-story log cabin house. Mrs. Humphreys still lived in the same old frontier home her great-grandparents had built during early Texas pioneer days; she had been born in that pleasant old place, too, and intended to die there as well—twas a good thing that her ancestors had constructed a large domicile or else she would appear as white-trash on all that vast landed holdings of hers. That frugal Mrs. Humphreys liked my old Uncle Scotty a lot; they were both true-blue hard-working characters, bosom buddies so to speak if you could imagine such an intimate thing as their being platonic kindred souls finding each other in the Back Woods. They were made out of the same eccentric mold of hard work, these two of-a-kind misers with high pockets cut deep and connected by their mutual money strings. They were kind of like economic Siamese twins joined by the dollar sign of life to their savings bank account. But old lady Humphreys was more of a spend thrift than old Unk of mine ever was. Mrs. Humphreys at least once in her long stingy-gut life-time spent money like a drunk Indian when she bought a fleet of brand-new Cadillac automobiles to park up and down her long driveway, just to show off her Texas style proof of being rich and not so poor like the local rumor mill had reported (Cadillacs by the dozen were the real proof of Texas big-rich back then in those depression days so that old lady had it all sewed-up in a bag for sure by putting the grapevine wags to rest with status symbols all over the place. And old Mrs. Humphreys could not even drive any kind of car.

The Humphreys wealth and influence did not stop in the Big Thicket territory. A favored daughter named Kalita Humphreys had been tempted to explore the Big Apple limelight lure of jaunty ole New York City Broadway glamour to become some kind of stage-struck actress way back when. The Kalita namesake originally came from the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Chief Kalita so no scalping ever happened to the befriended pioneers in the early days Piney Woods Texas settlement. Thus, Kalita Humphreys as one of twelve children lived-up to her proud heritage stock of being the chief-one or foremost when she finally returned to Texas from New York City's Broadway theatres to establish the first little theatre training group in Texas, now named Dallas Theatre Center. All that immense backwoods money finally brought some big-time cultural edification to Texas. Well, I know all this low-down first-hand news on the Humphreys family besides being small town neighbors because we are all branch-water kin; we are thus all sort of double kin since Sherwin Winniford's mother Lula Lane Wiggs Winniford is related to the Humphreys plus a Taylor cousin had married John Wesley Hardin. Everybody wants to claim kin to rich folks, or so it seems, because some of the filthy lucre just might rub-off on us poor envious souls. But the good-book Bible lessons tell us that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the pearly gates of Heaven, so some deep dark secret sins must be hidden to have gotten all that wealth (yet, some strict Fundamentalist Bible thumpers pointed-out that Mrs. Humphreys technically wasn't a man so her wealth would not keep her out of the heavenly portals after all). Now-a-days, big money is all that really counts in high society churches to buy respectability from a sinning spree. And that is one sinful disease that most people want to catch real fast; moneyitis is the malady of the masses. Moneyitis will cause good guys to act in any fashion to gain possession of it. Birthright inheritance like the Humphreys is indeed the best way to get rich since the sins of getting the ill-gotten goods aren't your concern. The heirs to a big fortune always glorify or exaggerate the goodly trait of their dear dead rich ancestors.

Rich folks abounded all over the Big Thicket timberlands even during the Great Depression but mainly through the divine providence of inheritance as all the good God fearing folks quickly pointed-out on the defensive. My young niece Loretta Mackey was not one of the chosen few but she was the step-daughter to a mighty powerful wealthy man so she stood a good chance to meet all the uppity rich folks easily on a casual but proper social level. Well, young Loretta grew up fast, maturing into a real looker for sure and thus naturally married a local moneybags romeo named Raymond Cesna. Now, she played her cards just right in getting married into a mighty stingy family; they were rich but not as wealthy as the Humphreys. Even the rich have a pecking order in the hierarchy of money matters. Loretta played jokes on us all as a matter of course, just to provide honest clean fun that was home-made to pass the time on dull rainy days before television and good radio soap operas (all of us old timey home-folks knew how to take a joke when we were the butt of it all). Most of us local yokels knew how to be a good sport when the "who-rawing" funning around got the best of us, or at least we did not let the shocking shame of it all show in public. Anyway, my high stepping niece Loretta played a master stroke joke on her stingy-gut rich in-laws soon after they had kept riding her frame so much about spending too much money on movie magazines and fingernail polish. Her husband's parents owned an oil field or two but spent very of it as they liked to brag; they were just like my old Uncle Scotty, all of them being so frugal to keep all the wealth to themselves as long as possible. All the rich families knew each other well and liked to compare their parsimonious ways to each other's stingy shenanigans to see if they could "out-frugal" each other. But newcomer Loretta got the best of them one time at least, and her prize prank was just my kind of tomfollery. Although in similarity to the rich folks kind of quiet fun, Loretta's jaunty antic was like comparing gravel to gourds at a vegetable market bazaar.

Loretta's bizarre impish sort of fun speaks for itself. Loretta Mackey Cesna really knew how to get her licks in to get even with her own way of having quiet Cracker Jack funning around. That niece of mine was a real live stump off the old family log when she bought a Cracker Jack Box and got a prize crystal glass solitaire ring so she quickly proceeded to pass it off as the real thing to her backwoods in-laws one day when she conveniently returned from Houston town, saying that she had charged it as an expensive gift to herself at Corrigan's Jewelers. Those penurious old folks nearly had a hissey fit; they disowned her then and there right on the spot. And that big knock down-drag-out argument led to the legal grounds for divorce. And the brother Bowman or Bo Cesna could not convince the old folks of the rawhiding joke so his peace-making role as a Bible scholar did not allow him to inherit the world after-all. And besides Loretta was sick-and-tired of their miserly ways when they actually could live much better as she so well knew; this joshing gag backfired on Loretta and she did not give a flip. We thusly had us a real live soap opera going-on everyday in that town because of Loretta's droll sense of humor and need to liven-up a dead dullard world. We did not need the radio or newspaper comics to entertain us in the Big Thicket; we had the real thing of live human drama coming our way each day on the edge of the Big Thicket forestlands. The good folks of the Big Thicket were characters enough for the local scenario or entertaining screenplay.

Entertainment had to be made by each person back then so we made the most fun all the better when it just happened natural like. Personal contact made the best impression on us folks in the Big Thicket; we could all best relate to place names and local people that we best knew—that's why gossip travelled so fast and

got circulated the very same day that it happened. Not even current events could get spread around like manure about the personal dirt on local folks. You see newspapers and radio were foreign events to the Big Thicket folks. National or current world events often got waylaid in the Big Thicket's own wire service spoken bulletins that were more post haste or better than mail delivery ever could be by some oral juicy gossip on a well-known local character. The local yokel gentry just did not believe outsiders would tell the whole truth on them so word-of-mouth was preferred to some far fetched data. Folks even talked facts about elections and politics in general only as they applied to them personally, not from outside sources. The real facts could take years to get circulated so local gossip was the best in demand. As I said before, some folks still thought that Abe Lincoln was still alive; well, these same local hayseed rubes as the city slickers called us would argue or bad mouth us till the cows came home dry that they were correct and that we were dead wrong, never them being mistaken. Some of the Jayhawk yahoos were even yet avoiding the Confederacy army draft after all these decades (even young men today are on the run like their dads or grandpaws before them from the Confederate army days—old ways die hard here). 'Tis no wonder that the modern world rejects this place by refusing to talk sense to us. No modern conveniences of electricity or telephones had yet reached all over the Big Thicket forestlands. Even Sheriff Victor Shaubarger's home was a one-eyed monstrosity to the local rustics as well as myself; his house was a revolutionary circular showplace—folks said he had to have round chairs and beds stuck in every nook and cranny. The idea of a glass house was still too mind boggling to consider as truth as one minister preached against such eccentric liberal use of God's trees in this fashion. Now, that is being backwoodsey for sure by anyone's standards of behavior. And that is the truth or I never spoke it about some of my fine good neighbors in the Big Thicket.

Truth was my longsuit for sure. I had rather tell the absolute true facts than make-up a better long tall tale story. Truthful fun never can hurt anyone like me, though. I had rather entertain folks with a spruced-up wild country tale than spread gossip in the rumor mill pipeline like some of my own good relatives do. Just like my old coon dogs Bosco and Rosco being forever lost is not a far fetched or broad faced lie on my part, only a white washed truth to hold the attention while I spread the truth around. In fact, I was only a fair-to-midland coon hunter. And my coon dogs were only the run of the mill good hunting dogs.

Another coon dog hunter in the Big Thicket folk lore was Charles Marlowe Green. Charley Marley as we called that bear of a man who liked to hunt coons better than me really knew his way around these parts. He knew every step of the way in those big woods like the back of his hand. Charley Marley hunted for more than the mere sport of the kill; he sold pelts and even wore a coon skin cap like James Bowie or Daniel Boone and all the rest of the original settlers of wilderness country in this great country of ours. Coons look much like regular kitty cats. And my daughter Lynna Estelle had a kitty cat named Nosey Lee who looked exactly like a small coon herself. That feline got her name honestly from being so inquisitive to go everywhere the action went, even on the scent of my hunting dogs. Nosey Lee nearly got shot dead more than once by those big white hunters in the Big Thicket forestlands.

Nosey Lee was a beauty of a cat, being Persian and all that long hair stuff. Nosey Lee was also a true character of the local animal kingdom with unusual loyal talents. That kitty cat saved our small children many a time from getting snake bit by one of the many poisonous species that roamed the local terrain. Her pussy

cat instincts charmed those rattlesnakes right out of their slithering skin. And I don't mean charming hospitality like a Southern Belle Scarlett O'Hara to a Rhett Butler type with drippy sweet talking either. That kitty cat could stare a copperhead snake down to nothing flat by twitching her tail to keep the reptile from hypnotizing her. Nosey Lee would ever so slowly move in a circle around any and every coiled snake as its heady hissing tongue came out; we usually went running to chop the head off those venomous serpents. We kept an axe and a hoe at every corner of the house as well as at every doorway of the out-buildings. Copperheads, rattlesnakes and water moccasins were the typical run of the mill viper in this neck of the woods. But really big mean poisonous serpents also came on banana boats from South America up the Houston Ship Channel along the San Jacinto monument. Deadly stinging snakes from South of the border got off the boat regular as you please like clock work along the channel all the time; we killed lots of those mean stingers; a hoe bounced like a rubber ball off those thick hides and that is when the sharp axe came in handy—had to be careful of the chopped off heads because the fangs could still bite and kill you. A snake does not die until sundown even after it has been hacked to smithereens—now, that is not a liar's tall tale for sure let me tell you. Snakes are a normal part of life in South East Texas.

Snakes live everywhere, even up in trees. They have a reptile good time falling down on unsuspecting folks walking through the trees minding their own good business if you can imagine that. Snakes mate by coupling into a ball and just rolling around like a used automobile tire. Serpents copulate by rolling down the ditches or anyother place they like. I try to stay clean of those reptil good times, even watching can be dangerous to your health. Local folks all know to avoid all snakes as much as possible. Thus snake proof fencing became the rage when some high powered salesman came along with a silly gimmick that so many rich folks bought as a genuine line. That same salesman must have been the very same guy who sold iceboxes to Alaska Eskimoos. Anyway, I got his goat one day when he was not looking but that is another story about the super-duper salesman who sold the golden fleece idea of snake-proof fences to the rich folks of the Big Thicket. Thus, another status symbol was to have these fancy snake-proof fences; a mesh wire was built into the bottom third portion of the chain length fencing. But a serpent can entwine itself over and beyond the confines of a wall with the greatest of ease so a wire fence is easy as pie climbing. Snakes just go anywhere they want to go! Wealthy folks fell for the line, hook line and sinker too. They were grasping at straws and rich folks seemed to think they could buy their way out of snake purgatory as we called this hellacious part of the big wide Texas world.

Snake trees do indeed exist. A bushy tree with low hanging limbs provide the best home for an airborne snake. They like to lie high up and look down on things when they can. Snakes will pounce down on unsuspecting souls just for the fun of it all, too. But mostly a tree provides a good place to land an easy meal ticket on an innocent rodent or nest of bird eggs. Old logs also provide good breeding grounds for serpents. They lay their eggs in a safe place, even swallowing their young to transport the little snake-ettes as my little girl Lynna Estelle called those critters. Snake trees usually have a lot of ivy hanging down as an enticement of leisure pleasure beckoning like the Garden of Eden with its snake in the grass. I knew which trees to avoid since I worked for my brother-in-law Vic Shauberger's lumber mill.

The biggest and the best trees in the world grow in the Big Thicket for sure. But the biggest trees have never been seen or cut in the Big Thicket forest be-

cause of being protected from harm by order of the High Sheriff himself. Ole Vic saved the best growth as a sacred monument to God's handiwork. The best trees are thusly saved for some distant future need if anyone today knows where to go searching for the really big fine trees. All the underbrush keeps the easy view hidden from seeing the prime trees. Thus, you literally can't see the whole forest for the trees as the old adage goes in the Big Thicket Forest. Really had to shake a leg to find the best trees on your own or get-up early in the morning to beat me there. I protected boss Victor's favorite property from abusive over-cutting. My brother-in-law the sheriff owned several saw mills so he possessed some of the tallest and best trees in the whole world. But those famous really tall Texas trees never get cut down; we were all afraid to cut the truly large trees that Victor Shauberger owned. No one wanted to rip his drawers with the big boss employer of the Big Thicket. Victor would be off anyone for life like a wet shirt if you did him wrong. I worked for Victor and picked out the ones to cut so I do know where all the really good stuff is located. Now, I would never tell a lie about those fine tall trees.

The really large trees were so big around you could never get through walking or measuring them; it was easier to fall off a log backwards than to cut a new tree down. And some trees were so thick that you could never walk to their end—at least I never walked to their end. Some trees were so tall that you could not see the tops on the clearest of days. All of these tallest of Big Thicket forest trees were definitely too big to risk cutting down so that is really why they survived to this day for the telling of this tale. Those really tall trees would have fallen half way around the world, I am sure; and thus they would have crushed too many cities to a pulp. I had learned my lesson with that big tree years ago that fell all the way to New York City at Christmas time. We want to keep all the good yankees alive and happy or snug as a bug in a rug selling them our Texas oil to keep warm in the sever cold winters up there in the snowy north-east. I feel sorry for them not being able to live in Texas like all of us blessed folks down here. But then the whole world would crowd us lucky few Texans into oblivion if they all suddenly got the word to invade Texas as the perfect place to live or the best resort land of this good green earth.

South Texas is the perfect year round resort area. The snowbirds from yankeeland already flock to our wild winter funland in the ruby red grapefruit tropical citrus valley. My wife's family has had a big handed finger in the economic pie of development in Texas. My sweetheart wife Miss Ella has a cousin named Robert Ellis who helped develop the ruby red grapefruit industry in his adopted ~~commuter~~ Texan status state of being. Cousin Robert Ellis lived all his life on the old Ellis family founded plantation near Florence, Alabama from whence numerous Texas Ellis descendants hailed, especially the kinsmen Welcum Wilson clan whose grande sire Stewart Wilson had married an Ellis relative prior to the large family wagon train moving to Texas. Whole families settled into unknown territory together so not all cutthroats on the lam came to wilderness Texas as the mass media would have tell. Texas is a place for all types of folks, as it always has been—now, that is the bad and ugly of it all. And that is the honest to God Texas truth if I ever told it.

The Texas truth is bigger than all outdoors of other states. The power of the blunt truth can be worse than a Texas tornado; it devastates everything in its path. And that kind of forceful truth was what my little boy used on folks in his innocent sweet acting way. Tornadoes have always followed in my footsteps

so tis no wonder that my little son was a stormy truthsayer with dangerous consequences for everyone in ear shot. My little boy delighted in telling the whole gory truth like a storm trooper going into war torn territory with full verbal ammunition; little Bobby especially used the truth squad tactics on local preachers by telling just how the cow ate the cabbage so to speak. Choice tidbits of the little boy Taylor Tactics can best be shown by direct quotes only, "Methodists are so broad minded acting that you can feed them any line like a catfish on a tow line with the magic buz word Christian in it to catch their future membership drive list so they can merge with other churches to gain bigger church rolls and Baptists are so hard shell that they see no evil or harm in what each other does to fellow members—can't fall from grace once saved so any dastardly deed will do to spread their influence in politics by preaching from the pulpit exactly how to vote even though separation of church and state is expected of all other groups." When my little son got on a roll, he kept going headstrong or bent for hell as one sulking minister put it. "Church of Christ could sleep most members to a bed during a protracted revival meeting because they are so narrow minded. And the smallest circle of folks in heaven is the Church of Christ's who think they are the only ones there." And my boy liked those religions; you should have heard him when he was on an angry tear! My little boy used his dry brand of jokes to speak his mind and tell the hard truth.

Folks just naturally avoided our truthful son like the plague so we finally decided to move from the edge of the Big Thicket near Hardin. We also decided to move because we got a big nudge from the local gentry who don't put-up with newcomers very long. Folks get mean real fast when told the whole truth in public. The local gentry of ill sorts drove their wild cattle down the town streets from one section of grazing to another section of graze land. Thus, the cattle would mosey wherever they pleased. Brahman bulls were the speciality of all the local breeds that could survive the long hot summers and then the bitter cold of the winters; the bulls had a big humped back like camels when seen from a distance. My little boy called them humpers; those silvery gray creatures humped all over the place, too, according to my son. The Brahmin cows were not so bad to leave a herd when being drive down the streets unless a calf got separated or lost. But a full grown Brahman bull was ornery as all get-out, let me tell you. My son called them Brahmer-humpers also. This breed of cattle in the Texas Big Thicket was bigger and meaner than anywhere else in the whole world. Brahmer bulls had an eye for my boy, just like they had been instructed to terrorize that little boy; my little son feared those humpers more than anything else I ever saw him avoid on purpose (my son did not fear the dark or mind going down scarey trails in the Big Thicket woodlands, and bad barking dogs just hushed when he went over to pet or stroke their bellowing heads). But my boy kept his distance from those big off-white humpers. Well, anyway, one morning early at about daybreak a herd of Brahmers were being driven past the house; we had installed a ten foot fence along the front boundary the year before when a bull had tromped across the long front porch and butted-out a whole window pane. On this early morn day, a really fiesty Brahmer bull jumped our ten foot tall stockade fence flat footed when he saw my little boy, like on cue that Bull went after my little truth sayer as if having been hired by the local preachers. A Brahman bull was well-known for jumping a tall fence when fancied by a seasoned cow on the far other side. And that's no bull, no cock and bull story for sure. The ministers's morning coffee-clutch-break at the local cafe was pleased as punch about that story to relate. One or two of the preachers almost decided that my little boy was half human to be afraid of something at long last since they feared his truth doses.

The truth of the matter about those Brahmer bulls was they they smelled fear and just instinctively knew to charge the lightly held territory where my boy cowered from their deadly eyeballing stare. Oddly enough, he feared only that whitesh breed of cattle since he never had seen one till we moved to the edge of the Big Thicket. We always owned livestock and had them nearby. My boy was born with the cholic and was allergic to cow's milk till he was almost three years old. Thus, we had a nanny goat for his daily fresh milk (refrigerators and ice boxes were not easy to maintain in the countryside so fresh foods daily had to be provided).

But some daily early morning good things did happen when the cattle drives took the Brahmers passed our house. One morning early at breakfast time for my little son, a Brahmer cow with no little calf trotted up to the gate of our cyclone fence enclosed yard; we did not have any fresh milk for his breakfast cereal for that little kid of mine so that mother cow sidled-up to the wire fenced part to poke her teats right into his hungry face; little Bobby suckled that nanny pretty as you please. That Brahmer cow just looked at my flaxon haired son and thought his albino curls and pitiful hungry coweyes were a lot like one of those little herifiers so those kindred souls met on common ground to feed my son his morning milk, now that was a true-blue milch cow if I ever saw one. Now, this is the God's honest truth or else my sweetheart wife Miss Ella would be rolling her eyes heavenward like a Los Vegas pinball machine going full tilt in forceful circles. My wife Miss Ella keeps me truthful because she can't pretend to ignore my telling tall tales; it shows on her face what she is thinking.

You got another thunk coming if you think that I would ever displease my sweetheart Miss Ella for long. But I did have to be myself or be my own person. She did not henpeck me for long about telling my stories. That Brahmer cow tale is no yarn for sure. Another barnyard tale has to do with the nanny goat that we kept as stable stock for the milk supply to feed our baby boy in the early wee hours of his infant days. Well, that dang nanny goat became a permanent fixture around the place, more of a pet than a mere milker. Pet names had to be given to all the animals. The nanny goat was named Shebagoatah.

The nanny Shebagoatah had the run of the place; she could jump on top of a low hanging roof top and walk pretty as you please all along the slope of the gable, like being on a mountain top slope for sure. My boy liked his milk fresh or luke warm, not refrigerated like some squalling kids today prefer. The cholic just up and got cured all by itself by age three unless the goat's milk done its job of curing the boy. Well, my little son was allergic to his mother's milk as well as cow's milk originally so the goat was our only alternative (formula bottle milk had ruined my daughter's teeth so we avoided the false substitute and thus used only the real thing for our baby boy). As an infant, the cow's milk would curdle on his cast iron stomach and all you really good ding-dong-daddies know what happens to curdled milk on babies! It goes upchuck right on us later when we are about to leave all dressed up for work when we hug the little cuss all full of goodbyes; my boy could puke a blue streak on a nice clean shirt. Even my son rolled his own cow eyes when regurgitated results messed me up good with the smelly vomit. Those were the good old days, best not remembered or repeated.

Good times are made to happen or at least the attitude for positive acceptance makes the good times flow easier. My sweetheart wife Miss Ella had a very positive attitude about whatever life brought her way; she laughed a lot and seemed very happy indeed when aggravating things happened the most often. Well,

that ornery nanny goat had a clever mind of her own; she didn't get milked unless she wanted to be. One morning early at daybreak, we needed just enough fresh nanny milk for my little boy to quince his thirsty hunger (little Bobby boy would get up during the night to drink the icebox milk so it would all be gone at dawn when the hungries really do hit a growing boy). Naturally, Miss Ella my sweetheart wife went to milk that persnickety nanny goat herself. You know, it took all of us Taylors to get one measley cup of milk from that ornery goat.

That fiesty nanny goat jumped on top of the milk shed that was twenty feet long and just barely head high to require bowing the cranium before entering. That nanny goat ran from end to end just out of reach from out-stretched arms with a milking pail. I shook a big hickory stick at that carousing goat to make her run from the far end back again toward my wife's out-stretched arms. A few choice name-calling tirades also seemed appropriate for the exhausting situation. But I was thankful that this Shebagoatah milking-machine-on-the-run was not on the ground or else we would have pranced all over the Texas terrain like an army on the offensive. My wife and two children plus myself pursued that nanny goat back and forth, just out of arm's reach, like some weird game of chance in the favor of the goat. Yet my disgusted cadre remained deligent and untiring. We intended to win if it took the rest of our lives. And a lifetime just might be required to wear down that jumping Shebagoatah.

The goat was in the cat-bird's seat for sure and was having fun calling the shots of our early morning anguish. I was getting mean and ugly enough to go get my shotgun to shoot the hell out of that damned goat. And I meant business too. Just at that decisive moment, my wife finally got hold of a dangling teat.

That danged goat dangled her baggy teat and my wife on the edge of eternity for the next half-hour that seemed to last a lifetime. Miss Ella held on for dear life—the dear life of that goat was at steak since I was still eyeing my shotgun for sure. Then, my daughter Lynna Estelle began carrying a bucket to catch a wayward stream or two at a time of spewing milk when it did finally spurt out while running pell mell back and forth. Little Bobby boy was there jumping up and down like he had to wee-wee or something worse. Sometimes, milk would squirt onto his anguished face and open lips from that fast moving teat of that ornery nanny goat. To this day, seeing a container of goat's milk reminds me of the day ole Shebagoatah ran away on the roof tops while we tried to milk her. Life was never dull or tedjious as the old timers would say back in those dark ages days.

Those good old days or long years living on the edge of the Big Thicket forest was indeed never a dull moment. I would never have the strength again to enjoy doing all those same old things again if I could go back in time and place. I experienced all this tomfoolery just to put food on the table—why else would I keep a cavorting Shebagoatah nanny after that episode on the roof tops!

Food was indeed for the taking in the Big Thicket forest lands. But only the strong of heart and heardy could survive the tribulations of obtaining the choice table fare. Coon stew and O'possum soup got mighty tiresome on the palate. Thus, I resorted to the blue skies to obtain a unique meal. I used my shotgun to obtain some blackbird meat. Blackbird pie tastes not so bad if you are starved and got nothing else to eat. My family was hungry for something different from coon stew so I was not a country bumpkin or local yokel hayseed just killing birds for a pie—we were hungry. We even used small ball bearings to make our own shot for the gun. We ole homefolks were resourceful. My children collected the ball bearings

when they found likely materials for such use; those youngins always were on the eye balling alert for wadding and such things. My children also rolled cigarettes for me. An old Camel pack was used to stuff the homemade cigges into—they thought the pretty picture on the package was the best one to use for me in public. Those two youngins of mine also sold rolled cigarettes to others at the general store. My little boy could fold the cigarette papers and pour the tobacco easy as a whistle without spilling a smidgeon and then lick the paper to seal the papers like glue. And then stuff the cigges into the store bought pack. I even felt rich using those cigarettes when in public. All my children's good traits came from the teachings of their deligent mother Miss Ella. I would never have had the patience to make such good citizens out of them as my wife did.

Good citizenship was the main concern of the folks in the Big Thicket; the schools were carefully monitored by the local PTA. Now, this Parent Teachers Association membership quietly investigated all the teachers and kept close tabs on their personal lives. Mostly old maids taught school back then. Those old gals had nothing better to do than mark papers and take out their personal frustrations or suppressive lifestyle on the mean kids. Bad kids really got their ire worked out of them. Those dried-up old maids really knew how to intimidate lazy mean students. A spinster teacher took it as a personal affront when a lesson was not learned by rote. Those schoolmarms of olden days, not so long ago when the teaching profession belonged to the unmarried ladies, did a good job of imparting the necessary knowledge for the young to run societal institutions, so unlike today's functional illiterates who are in control of things. My children had the same dedicated kind of teachers as I had in Commerce town; teachers used to be made from the same mold; they stomped out ignorance like dancing on an army of invading cockroaches—every schnook learned or else as any dolt soon regretted messing with an old maid's mild manner turned vicious. School was a place for learning, not a social experience.

The Schoolhouse was a place to learn citizenship and thus know how to fit into society. My children did well enough, especially Little Miss Lynna who earned all A's on the report cards. A long walk home was good to keep the blood circulation going really nice. But the way home was not without risk even in those pristine days. A Billy Goat chased my little girl home more than once. Billygoat Gruff was the name given to that wild animal.

Wild cattle roamed the countryside back in those days without fear of being stolen. Seemed that the mean old louts did not fear theft since they were the bad SOB's themselves. Well, my tomboy daughter Lynna Estelle got chased walking home from school by a big Brahman bull or humpers as my son called them. That mean Brahmer bull chased my daughter and her friend Joyce Davis till the two girls reached a billboard; those gals stayed for hours on top of that sign post till I came along. Joyce Davis's mother was post mistress at the train stop where she put the mail in a sack on the signal post for the train to hook it off while speeding ever so fast through this whistle stop place called Hardin. And that working mom was ahead of her time and thus did not have time of day to go checking on domestic ills of the school girls so those bullied gals really were up a creek with a piddley paddle till I found their screaming souls in the tree tops on that tallest of sign posts. Like I said, the Big Thicket was never a dull moment. And it was a good place to get lost for life

Life was not boring ever, in those depression days. But that place was full of constant trials and tribulations. I could debate the pros and cons like the

proverbial angels dancing on the pinhead of a needle. I liked all the people and hard times of those years in that place because they was all that I had and thus had no choice. I just took what the times dished out without much thought to what could have been happening if I had been wealthy or whatever.... The Big Thicket wetlands gave us lots of natural disasters to keep our eyes peeled on the QT for. The swamps were full of alligators and stalking panthers plus all the poisonous snakes; all these natural elements were there to eat you alive, yet the most beautiful wild orchids in continental America grow there like a ladie's slipper on display as part of Mother Nature's better efforts for public enjoyment. But our family had to move out of the Big Thicket loveliness because of the snakes. My little boy kept playing outside as boys will be boys to do; he kept riding his tricycle over a stick that kept jumping up to bump his tires or so my son said; it was a groundrattler that our kitty cat Nosey Lee quickly ran to the rescue to kill or charm the pants off with her evil eye hypnotic spell. That cat could certainly get more than your tongue with her stare. She saved that boy's life a dozen times a day so my sweetheart wife Miss Ella was nearly a nervous wreck worrying about would-be snake bites that luckily never happened. And I loved my poor Texas-broke heiress wife too much to see her consternation of quiet desperation even among the primeval forest beauty of the Big Thicket. But even to this day when I see a twig move underfoot, I can't help but think about the ground-rattlers that looked like a stick. And I was not selfish enough to insist on staying at Hardin near the place my good coon dogs left and might someday return to find me. But a good coon dog could sniff out the owner like me anywhere in this big state of Texas. All good things must end so we moved away from Hardin when the last straw finally happened.

The last straw was when my daughter got head lice in her new cap. All the girls wanted to wear or try-on her toboggan cap. The nits of her hair kept the eggs hatching out for months on end. No one nearby seemed to mind the itching since that was normal for them. The cost for a good medicine was outrageous so we just used sheep-dip on my children; that cured the problem immediately. This kind of accepted filth by the local populace made us move out and far away. We moved to another nearer job-filled Houston suburb. Channelview was our next home destination.

Our next home stop in Channelview was not a big city location back then. The deep woods came to our back door. We were directly across the channel from San Jacinto monument; the lone star top could easily be seen from the bedroom window. But I was down in the dumps for leaving Hardin and all my high faluting relatives. My big sister Opal Shauberger was a joy to watch coming and going in high style as national president of the ladies's auxiliary to the Woodman of the World Circle plus being listed in WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN WOMEN. I missed all the glamour of the social life circuit. But I still had a sister nearby; Lissie Taylor Love was a widow woman as the local boys commented so often with her ten children to raise; thus, no one tried to marry her with all those mouths to feed.

All those mouths to feed was like a cadre force at the dinner table. In those days, dinner was the noon meal and supper was the night feast. We made everyone sit still while eating because moving around would require more food to fill, like a sack of potatoes gets shook to make it hold more, so the squirming children would take more eats to get satisfied. Us parents had to cover all the bases when money is short. My Lissy-kissey as my son called his favorite aunt was really blessed with the problem of feeding a herd of youngins. We all just did our best to get through each day without killing ourselves.

Putting groceries on the table was the main concern back then for my sister Lissie Love. Her four oldest sons were rough as a boot and helped earn a living. Mack and R.C. (Cola Bud as we called him) could back a semi-truck straight as an arrow down a long alley with hardly a glance out the window; then, Ray Love began his own truck line as a desperation to earn some big bucks. But for now in this Great Depression that was a training ground for frugal survival we parents had to feed our families. Lissie had two sets of twins among her brood of ten. She owned her own downtown diner for a spell. At least that put food on the table for the gang but the oldest helped-out and also got necessary pocket money from the cash register all along as needed. The boys told Lissie each night that the sum was used for personal needs. That economic practice put her out of business in no time flat. Her husband Bud Love was killed in a train wreck and she had her twin sons that same season when the Depression began so Lissie's life was full of tragic events at one time. I even helped operate the diner or at least tried to help corral those blustering boys; they needed a daddy better than me. Lissie's sons always helped her; they never neglected the other siblings even when married. Love was what bound us all together was the favorite epithet of all us kinfolks.

Kinfolks can be a caution to some families. But not to us loving Taylors. The head lice showed up again for the second infestation before we moved; the pretty winter cap had larvae eggs in the woolen fabric so we had to burn it after combing the nits for the umpteenth time. Again, the sheep dip did the trick. Parents of the infested kids said it was only a phase and that God would cure them when it was time; everything in this world was predestined by God and mankind would be doing an evil deed to mess with God's work. We never returned to the doors of that anti-Christ Church after that silly superfluous remark. Real Texans know that God helps those who help themselves, especially in workbrittle Texas.

Channelview, Texas was our kind of town. We suddenly lived among a nest of kinfolks afterall. Lissie and her children lived down the road. We rented the house known as the Johnson place where an Ordnance Plant gate now marks the spot of our old driveway entrance. The Johnson family was also kin to my wife's great-grandmother Susan Johnson Winniford of St. Louis, Missouri before all of them settled into pioneer Texas, with their show-me state of being attitude helping to form the Texas brag syndrome statewide—now, that is the honest-to-God truth.

Honest neighbors were plentiful as usual for my sweetheart wife Miss Ella. Her best friend and good neighbor was Peggy Richardson; they cooked up all sorts of good things and fun schemes to do together. Those two hard workers sold pot plants they raised and whatever else they could by the side of the road to earn food money during the Great Depression. Many local stingy-gut skinflints only stopped to look and bad mouth the whole enterprise; they said the prices were high as cat's back on everything at the roadside stand; jealous mossbacks think you should pay them to take the stuff off your hands since your things aren't worth selling in the first place. But the homegrown plants had the biggest appeal even though the local wags declared our two-bit wares weren't worth over a plugged nickel. Our big billboard or front door attraction sign had a slogan that got attention: "Our future is so bright that we have to wear eye shades." This was indeed the great heart of the depression. We needed every dime we could get. My wife taught Peggy how to cultivate a green thumb; East Texas natives have a growing knack that other folks seldom have. My sweet wife Miss Ella once pulled a long Elm tree sapling limb to whip a devilish horse out of our vegetable garden

and thus when her rage ended, my wife plopped down with a deep sigh of verbal relief that the fresh ellum switch stick being angrily grounded into the soft soil should grow into a tree. And that rich Texas soil took root of that split-ended sapling limb of an Elm tree branch to grow into a nice sized Texas tree of decent report before we moved away from Channelview. Now, that is a Texas sized green thumb for you. My wife Miss Ella could make anything grow real good and fast; tis a pity she did not decide to grow a money tree with her stubborn streak, full of greenback hundred dollar bills for me to spend (see how greedy the prospects of big money can make a poor ole boy even like me start acting). But I would have got first dibs on those money tree greenbacks if such things had happened. But my wife Miss Ella and Peggy Richardson did sell lots of green money making plants on the roadside leading to the refineries near Houston.

The roadside fruit stand as most folks called such enterprises back then did well enough for the bad times to supplement our basic needs. We also sold boneless bananas. A big sign advertised our Texas sized specials of the day. And the truth of our blatant advertising was never doubted when we peeled a sample banana to show no bones of any sort inside. I also made a pyramidal shaped wooden case, with my carpenter skills that no one would hire, to sell roasted peanuts or parched gubbers by the small paper sack full. We did well enough and I soon sold the franchise name rights of my product Tom's Toasted Peanuts for one hundred dollars cash. But during the Great Depression of the 1929-1939 era that was like a million dollars cash would be today. Money was scarce as hen's teeth back then, even the rich people were poor as Jobe's-turkey in that broke day. All the big money during flapper days circulation had just nearly stopped flowing so a few pennies would buy a great deal; adults could go to the movies for a nickel and a child for two cents. Even U.S. postage stamps were only a penny when you could get one. Cash money was indeed at a premium so I was a big-high-u-muck-mogal back in those hard-luck days with a fast hundred dollars cash in my grubby hands. My heiress wife's money was still in the failed bank that her father owned and thus had lost his cash reserves; all the high and mighty noble cavalier Winniford family was poor now like the rest of the world.

Poverty did not set well with the poor likes of my niece Elsie Taylor-Winniford even though the family bank was long broke. Miss Elsie still spent money like she had it all herself. Money did keep making a slow appearance by the twenty dollars just as the last penny disappeared at the Winniford Way homestead. The financial aid came from the high-stepping sister-in-law Miss Lynna Winniford for whom my tomgirl Lynna E. Taylor was named. Miss Lynna came to the rescue of the economic needs of the whole family. Miz Lynna had gold coins buried in the old home-place storm cellar; the stash was in the vicinity of the hoarded fortune saved from her grandmother's Confederate gun running days which boggled my broken-down way of thinking that 2,500 gold coins each worth twenty bucks at face value. And my frugal mother-in-law also possessed an equal amount in a similar cache or hide-way. The family money hidey-hole was the brick lined storm cellar that kept us all safe from the local tornadoes and now in the chips like nobody's business. Miss Lynna dug them out when any family member needed a few duty-free shackles and shared equally, never to ask repayment which she certainly never got one red cent back either from the poor-likes of us money grabbers (gold coins were illegal tender now to possess so the kin felt justified not to repay such a debt—the greed of good Christian ethics won a devil's egged meal on that one, some twisted redneck religion logic not to pay an honest debt!). Paper money was not as good as gold, let me tell you, as the failed bank stock holders learned the hard way. Of course, Miss Elsie dug-in like the good ole gold digger she always was. Miss Elsie was rightly called Miserous Elsie by the darkies in the Holler at Commerce town and name-calling was the only safe response behind her avenging back side; the local Blacks knew her well and had her number ready to ring at a monent's

notice, so to speak. Miserous Elsie was true misery or hell on wheels when anyone got on her bad side and got in the path of one of her wild tears!

Miserous Elsie Taylor-Winniford was a holy terror most of the time as was her earned reputation in the Commerce town Nigger Holler ghetto. But she was a dancing fool at the concerts that family musician Sam Winniford played. Being big stuff at his finest violin playing contest events really gave that woman the big head. She was always on some kind of localized rampage to pick somebody's bones clean. Don't get me wrong; I loved that niece of mine like the big bad sister-in-law she was. We just got along the way Mother Nature intended, like cats and dogs. After all, blood was thicker than this watered-down version of these family tales. All the rest of our whole delegation of kinfolks were not half the trouble as this one barracuda Taylor-named ready-made aggravation was.

All the other kinfolks would visit us down in the Big Thicket wilderness just to get away from Miserous Elsie's vicious tongue lashings. Some of the relatives would visit us in the Big Thicket just to see the sights and of course to have someplace free to go during the hard times depression. And all the Keith or kin also visited because their Aunt Opal Taylor Mackey Shauberger was big stuff as a club woman and her friendly husband Victor Shauberger was high sheriff of Liberty County. This was the closest thing to a celebrity that some of our related visitors had to break the monotony of their dull times at the old homestead during the Great Depression. Even friends came to see us as uninvited guests to pounce upon our front door unexpected. Old home week was what most folks used as a good excuse to stop over or get-together suddenly; old home week was just anytime a few good buddies got together to reminisce the good old times, like I am doing now about the Great Depression that surely was not the good ole times. Thank God that most sojourners helped with the chores; folks did not expect to be treated like some mighty potentate or high toned royalty. Just having the money to buy food was the only real problem with a gang coming for dinner during those lean days. My hunting dogs would have been a godsent to catch a fine entree or appetizing feast. But those pitiful lost hounds were still deep in the Big Thicket woods hunting the granddaddy of all coons to fit that ironing board cover my sweet wife Miss Ella had laid before their sad eyes or so I continually told all the visiting guests who would listen to my tale of woe.

Coon meat would have been the table fare worth waiting for back then. But turtle soup was also good, and I did manage to get my quota of turtles to turn into free eats. Good cooter is what we ate—that is down-home turtle soup as referred to by some good ole boys. Most of our visitors enjoyed heling catch the prize table menu critters which was never a planned thing till we had it in the bag literally. This necessary hunt provided entertainment at the same time so we were all happy as a clam. We sat around smudge pot fires and told jokes or related current events as we each knew them; no one had funds to buy a newspaper or could afford to buy a new battery to keep the wireless radio going during these hard times. The nightly fires helped to keep the mosquitoes and knats away, even in the summer time; it was hot as blue-blazes to keep a fire going during the humid nights but the insect bites were worse hell.

The worst thing that happened when family visited always seemed to occur at night. The cover of darkness though can hide a lot of embarrassment. Our fat farm kin that I mentioned much earlier still visited when they could get enough gasoline money to tour the great expanse of Texas, which always seemed to be our place when it came time to bed down or eat a meal. Well, one night late those

fine plump cousins broke the beds down as fast as they climbed into them. And that was embarrassing beyond words to the family annals when my little truthful son Bobby got through telling all the gory details about those wild tales. They all left at day break without saying a word of goodbyes. Only the whole truth has been told now. Folks were pretty desperate to visit someplace when they stayed overnight the second time at our house during the Great Depression.

Unwanted visitors could be a pain in the neck, whether family or no. We kept total strangers at bay from our place with a clever sign. We posted a big signboard that stated: BEWARE OF BAD DOG at the front gate. We had no dog at all, though, since my best coon hunting hounds were still lost in the deep woods. An eager salesman occasionally would ride right-up to our front door, all scared-like and holler out his half-raised car window; those brave drummers or salesmen hawked Watkins products, Raleigh goods and the proverbial Fuller Brush man. No Avon lady ever came calling on us way out in that Texas wilderness countryside. But one wiseacre drummer sales type guy figured out that we had no mighty big bad dog at all, but he cautiously drove anyway into our yard ever so gingerly. That particular high-powered salesman unwittingly left his panel truck door open when he pranced upon our porch to show his macho bravery self to my wife Miss Ella. Well, while that cockscomb of a show-off displayed his wares to sell, our nanny goat Shebagoatah had climbed into his open doored vehicle and was sitting-up big-as-life behind the steering wheel looking out the windshield as if about to drive away or so pleased with herself for having set up housekeeping for life there. Shebagoatah was so proud of herself, for you could easily tell by the glint in her ornery eyes, like a supreme monarch posed high on a golden throne now becoming a reigning old timey Queen of Sheba, for whom our goat was thusly named. And that nanny goat of ours was also chewing up a cud of a storm on a nice new Sunday-go-meeting bonnet; that goat ate at least a hundred dollars' worth of good Irish linen before that sporty-jack-of-a-salesman could get our smelly nanny Shebagoatah out of his Suburban truck. That macho dude was not so proud of his once brave self any more for defying our bad dog sign. He had been taken down a notch or two for sure. But he was glad to get away with the seat of his own pants still intact and not chewed clean off. I still laugh about that high-tailing salesman who thought he could sell an icebox to an Eskimoo or peddle snake-proof fences to Big Thicket hicks like me and my folks. Yet, I "seen-him-a-coming" for sure this time in Channelview after that shyster had hooked Hardin folks with his malarkey or line of blarney. Well, you do know now who finally got the last laugh back then.

The last laugh is always the best one of all, I can assure you. We had a laugh a minute back in Channelview—twas better to laugh than cry about all the hard times. That dogged episode, though, made us realize that a real live dog would have barked and thus earned its keep, plus we would not be liars if we had a true dog on the place. We never told a whopper of a lie, just little white lies to keep God from getting us for sure. Finally, we got a puppy dog when little Bobby boy stole the Maddingly boys's pup and then hid-out under the house which was three feet off the ground on old pylons. Snakes lived under the house by the score so tis a wonder that a copperhead didn't get a mouth full of Taylor hide-and-seek for sure. And also we did not want our truthful son stealing good dogs so we had to relent our hard-and-fast rule not to get another pet mouth to feed during this horrible long depression. A guy named Shawgie Hogie got us a puppy dog; we named it Boots because that male dog was all black with feet that looked like white painted galoshes or white-side-walled rubbers. The Maddingly five boys each had a dog across the road so naturally my son envied not having his very own

little doggie. Boots was a slick haired part hound dog. My little boy and Boots were buddies immediately.

But puppy dog Boots had to pass the hardest acceptance test of all by the kitty cat Nosey Lee. Boots passed inspection since he was an outside dog, not an indoor variety like so many folks have today. Dogs carry germs or bacteria and should not live next to people (peasants in medieval times lived in same room with all their animals and the life expectancy was extremely low because of the shared diseases such as chicken pox and cow pox). Even the cat Nosey Lee had a bed in a box outside for the night time. My wife Miss Ella was too nasty-nice clean to allow animals to sleep inside the house with our loved ones to risk getting common diseases or even skin rashes such as ringworm. Animals had their place in the heirachy of life living space. Dogs and cats respected each other's territory. Nosey Lee was master of the walkways on our place. That kitty cat would lay high upon a shelf in a shed or on a fence post in the yard or up a tree along the driveway. Nosey Lee kept a guarddog type watch on us all; she lived up to her name, nothing escaped her careful eye.

Nosey Lee eyed the passing life forms on the road in front of our place with almost indifference or so it seemed. A neighbor dog across the roadway had too much competition for its food or dinner hour so it went prowling to sneak a meal from other dogs since it thought it was top dog. That frisky male dog visitor barked up a storm as though about to eat Nosey Lee alive where she lay secure on a high wall shelf. And that was the beginning of the mistakes that ole top dog made in its brief life in our neck of the woods. Nosey Lee had just recently had a litter of kittens which she safely bedded high on a wall shelf. That alien dog just barked one time too many up Nosey Lee's tree. Nosey Lee just jumped down on that dog's hairy back, digging her claws in like a ready-made saddle; Nosey Lee rode that yelping dog to the front gate edge of our property boundary where she dismounted, hopped-off like a rodeo pick-up rider, so proud of herself for putting her bloody claws to such good use. Nosey Lee was better than any guard dog ever could be. All the neighborhood dogs had respect for Nosey Lee.

Neighbor dogs had all encountered Nosey Lee at one time or another. Another big dog had respect for Nosey Lee. That dog was named Tootsie and lived directly across the road. Tootsie belonged to Edgar White; he and his wife lived in a fancy log cabin house and had a fine job in a refinery at nearby Baytown. Tootsie was a large German Police dog who made a good security guard at their gate, to lie in wait of sleazy peddlers and other animals to detour or waylay. Tootsie was not friendly to anyother animals; she was a loner like some literary people appear not to need cronies. Nosey Lee and Tootsie got along just fine; they understood each other. Nosey Lee would waylay rats in the barn on the master White's place and toss them down to Tootsie to finish killing; they did their rat killing in a professional assembly line fashion so they were cohorts of some sorts.

But puppy dog Boots was not a cohort of those two with the rat killing. The pup Boots had to stay at our gate or else. However, Mr. and Mrs. White would give my little boy candy and gifts from their buying spree in town since they had no children and knew that we were short of funds. Boots would try to escort my son over to get candy sacks when the Whites called out that they had a surprise. One day, a big watermelon was given to my boy so Boots went along. But Tootsie remained lying across the gate bridge and did not move when Bobby stepped over the big German Police guard dog; Tootsie just stared at puppy dog Boots who promptly stopped dead in his tracks and yelped to fall into the canal ditch and then fled back

homeward, falling over himself all wet as a slippery bar of soap. Nosey Lee was observing all this ruckus from atop a high gatepost with a cheshire grin for sure.

Nosey Lee was still the big cheese or cock of the walk at our house and that end of the country lane roadway. That kitty cat loved to go fishing with Bobby boy just for the fun or skill like a human being would since that pussy cat did not eat her catch. That cat could fish faster than my son who was by then jealous and furious at the catty competition. Thus, Bobby boy brought Nosey Lee back to the house, lugging that big mamma cat in his small arms all the way down our long driveway with the cat's tail dragging in the porous iron ore pavement. My sweetheart wife Miss Ella took Nosey Lee in her arms and held the kitty cat till little Bobby turned to go back to his snakey fishing pole to hook crawdads. My wife simply, and rightly so, let the cat loose. Nosey Lee jumped out the nearby window (we had no window screen--cost too much back then to have a silly expense not bringing a tangible financial return). Nosey Lee beat Little Bobby back to the fishing hole. She was the best buddy companion my little boy ever had, even though he did not realize that she saved his life a dozen times every day. That nosey cat kept the snakes at bay.

Nosey Lee killed all sorts of reptiles that dared to get too close those kids of mine. Even a goat is good to stomp snakes with their cloven hooves. There were dozens of snakes to be seen rolling together or mating as one nasty minded man informed me. Like I didn't know the facts of life--that's why I only had two young children's mouths to feed rather than a dozen like some dumb clucks with nothing but populating daddy sex on their minds! Well, those fornicating snakes rolled around big as automobile tires under our house, thumping the floors with their heavy rubbery entwined tails while they wuz getting some action. And those cavorting snakes were longer than a garden hose variety, too, when stretched-out after their coiting adventures. This snakey experience was one Texan mystique that I hope never to repeat.

Snake handlers are a big thing in this part of the country, let me tell you. I don't like to look, much less watch the handling action. Even some religions profess this kind of live action. But my life was too full of fun things to go looking for trouble. Snakes were all over the place in Channelview and much worse than at Hardin--we had jumped out of the scared frying pan into the hot fire so innocent--like for us fool-hearted folks. The Houston Ship Channel was just over the next rise or hillock from our house; we could see the San Jacinto Monument directly across from our bedroom window. Shrill boat whistles put us to sleep every night like a lullabye. All kinds of snakes got off those banana boats from South America coming to make their new home under our house at that. I killed several coral snakes with my big axe; I preserved them in kerosene jugs to take back to East Texas to show-off to doubting Thomases like myself before I went to live in the Devil's snakepit here. The banded rings of red, black, yellow and white colors was so pretty to see till realizing their venomous bite would get you a ringside seat in the glory land of eternity. But I was now not ready to die since somebody had to feed my young children and I did not want them to starve to death! No body would for sure take another mouth to feed during this depression that just would not let up on us poor ole boys with families.

Bad mouthing the depression was about all we had to do most days besides look for snakes to kill before they big mouthed us to death. As I said before, the snakes were everywhere and kept the hell scared out of us. Even preachers

preyed upon the local terror of snakes by proclaiming that hades itself was full of slimey serpents entwining all around our sinful limbs for eternity so we had better be good church goers or else the devil would get us sinners for sure. And Satan had appeared as a snake in the Garden of Eden so a serpentine form was the true shape of the evil devil according to the ministers of God's true word. Not even tornadoes scared us as much as the local snake population.

Tornadoes, though, were still the same big bad menace as always. But we wuz too scared out of our normal wits of the snakes to worry about funnel cloud storms much anymore til they appeared on the terrain. Yet, the most numerous tornadoes happen along the gulf coast of Texas and then travel up Tornado Alley as it is called to Canada. Tornadoes travel all over Texas all year long ever time the weather changes. I did build us a storm cellar once or twice but to no avail because water seepage soon filled the space like an indoor swimming pool that surely did attract snakes for sure to take-up habitation there. Finally, I came-up with a brain storm of an idea to cure that problem.

My big idea was to build an above ground storm shelter out of logs since the cellar filled with water as fast as we dug it in this near sealevel conditions of the gulf coast area. I decided to out-best Mother Nature by building a semi-circle structure by piling the logs very close together in a tee-pee shape, all slanted into one another to sway with the high blowing wind; the top was a much slanted slope from the sides. Then, I made a hill of dirt like an Indian Burial Mound which I had viewed long ago up in deep East Texas. This earthen shelter had a double purpose; it was used to escape the tornadoes as well as store canned goods from the heat or cold. I built a heavy door to lock out animal predators, human and otherwise, since the depression caused strange things to happen to otherwise good folks. We spent a lot of time in this shelter to escape peddlers and other solicitors in general; we could hide from the world so to speak. We spent a lot of time in this hidey-hole above ground. Gnats and mosquitoes also denned-up inside there beside us. I finally got malaria but no one else in my family did so my natural resistance must have been worn to a frazzle by all the worry of trying to earn a living during the Great Depression anxiety days. I darn near died of that ailment, too. The fevers never seemed to let-up. I sweated like a bush hot in heat. And later chills would come like a winter storm in the hot summer of Southeast Texas. Also, years later, I never could give blood plasma donations because of having had malaria. I also contracted plasmohismosis from Black Birds simply because I had been stickened with malaria that had weakened my immune system decades earlier during the Great Depressions days.

The contagious malaria illness caused me to be treated like a leper in olden Bible times. The good ole boys always need as history shows a diseased group to vent their anger-on so my malaria case was worse than leprosy to them; I got ostracized by most of the goodly folks. I found out real fast who my true friends were; I nearly got stoned in public like a Bible days leper when I once went to the local post office. I am no ignorant fool so I then stayed home to recuperate with a stash of white lightning—tis better to get stoned by myself rather than be stoned by a local crowd of good-ole-boys. I was soon feeling no pain one way or the other about my human condition. I had nothing better to do with my time since I was permanently unemployed by the Great Depression and now confined by a genuine excuse of an illness called Malaria. At least I now had sympathy from other out-of-work folks who felt that I was much worse off than they with this incurable sickness.

While I was ill with malaria, I carved sticks into statues and sang a lot. I was best at yodeling. I could out yodel anybody. I could even yodel up all the wild birds to come listen to me. I even learned to whistle like any bird call that mankind ever heard. Birds came for miles around just to hear me or to give a listen. But I do honestly think that I fooled them birds into coming around because they thought that I was one of their own fine feathered fancy bird mates on the call. Now, that's no lie or I would not be alive to tell this tale since God would strike me dead with lightning if I should merely exaggerate.

Whistling Dixie and yodeling at the same time all day long passed the time till I got well or at least got-all-better-enough to go back to work as my little boy said when I did finally leave to return working at Victor Shaugberger's saw mills. I also had to entertain myself by continuing to kill snakes and pickle their ornery carcass to keep in huge clear jars like urine specimens to later show the kinfolks back in Dallas County; they had never seen the likes of such varmints and were skeptics like me at first till viewing them first hand—a picture is worth a thousand words underscored when seeing the real thing. The East Texas folks had never even seen an armadillo till we brought a baby live-one back to the old plantation with us on a visit one year; armadillos did not thrive all over the state till the 1960's when some smart aleck hippies decided to play Noah and spread mated pairs in their vans all over the state as the national mascot of Texas. Some of those long hairs "arked" armadillos into every one of the 254 counties of Texas to try and replace the Longhorn Cattle symbol as the mail emblem of wild Texas days. Armadillos eat bugs and tender plants so they dug-up our garden fast as we planted it back in those good ole bad days so we had to annihilate any animal that competed for food with us. We learned to dread those prehistoric looking animals. But the prolific snakes were always the most pressing problem and thusly kept us busy protecting the children as best we could while it was really Nosey Lee the kitty cat that kept the kids safe from harms way.

Harmful snakes and bad dogs were all that really worried us at Channelview as an every day occurrence. All the neighbors had dogs; Mrs. Manningly had several boys each with a dog as did the Mattingly family; dogs went roaming to find food as I said before. But the neighbors were basically good people as a general rule since I was well known and appreciated as an animal lover with the best coon dogs in the whole country side. I also could talk to the birds so I had gained respect of sorts. My malaria case made the truly bad folks stay far away enough to keep from catching the crud from me. I was persona non grata to those fearful folks; a raging fever will keep a redneck far enough away but being really clean clear of them is a never ending thing; they come around like the fair-weather friends they are to pick your brain for ideas or else to lift a few groceries to stock their own stash. Those fearsome guys wear dirty clothes and stack junk all around their place as a normal décor to name themselves as white trash which attracts varmints and vermin to all the stacks of junk.

I kept our old place neat as a pin while lounging at home to recuperate from the malaria fevers. I was also a good lookout for strangers coming around as well. No one stole much from us during the great depression, except for food and some decent clothes, because nobody had anything new enough to purloin. Besides, everything was broken-down and worn-out. We certainly did not have anything pretty good any more. Just watching the snakes jump up and cavort under the house was a big amusement, after all, while I was sick with malaria. Some of the religious snake handlers did drop by to visit while I was convalescing on the front porch.

I nearly wore-out that green painted wooden lawn chair that I had made. Well, those goodie-two-shoes snake handlers were very intrigued about the mating habits of all animals in the woods; seems that sex was on the brain for those gutter snipes after all; I was too diseased from the hot fevers and then the cold chills all in one day from malaria attacks to care about such things (chills during a humid South Texas summer is one exhausting experience you do not need to repeat or wish on your worst enemy—I danged near died of those malaria attacks). Those pecker head nasty-minded snake handlers just naturally know about such dirty things—an idle mind is truly the workshop of the devil. But even those sex crazed peterheads would not initiate a sex act because God was known to be watching and making a check list to be read on Judgement Day. Sex was not such a hot item on everyone's lips like today because back then getting food to put in your feeding hole was the real concern or big problem; most folks were too under fed to have the energy for much sexual activity anyway. Thus, children on the loose or prowl through the woods of the neighborhood did not have to worry about sexual attacks; the sex pots or peterheads did not abuse children because most folks really thought that God would strike them dead with a bolt of white lightning. Besides, most folks went to church all the time when the doors were open; there was nothing else real cheap to do or a better free place to visit all your friends. Church was a social place to go gossip in the Lord's name. Seems that some things never change.

The changing weather, however, caused tornadoes to suddenly blow in and thus kept us all on the constant lookout for a wayward cloud forming. Consequently, neighbors were always out on the porch searching the skies for God only knows what; all of us good citizens took careful notice of our surroundings. Nothing strange could sneak up on us good Texans. As a result, obvious crime did not get a chance to happen—now, under cover of darkness is whole-nothing ball game! I was the best of the lot, let me tell you. Anyway, no child molester would have lasted till night fall in our neck of the woods. We country boys were always on top of things all the time. Mother Nature was the one that had to be watched in those days before televised weather news casts. And neighbors stayed on good terms with each other because people had to be congenial to rally together when a God sent natural disaster struck.

Natural disasters were called cyclones in those good ole bad days, not tornadoes like today. As I have said before, tornadoes were the fearsome thing back in my hayday, and we had good skywatchers like you would not believe. We would ring bells or shoot-the-anvil as an alarm clock type of warning since most of us could not afford a telephone in those lean years. Thus, tornadoes were the big bad things to watch-out for.

But tornadoes just naturally followed me like a lost puppy behind a hang-dog looking boy. I was the person chosen by the community leaders to keep a constant vigil of the skyways. I was the chosen one back then. I could smell a cyclone windstorm way off so I was considered valuable to the whole neighborhood. Neighbors just hung around the house to hear what I would say so I killed time with those lucky souls who liked to hear my tall tales about chasing tornadoes all over upper Texas as they called my old timey youthful experiences with my uncle from Scotland. I made them all sit-up and take notice when a truly big wind came along one day to make them all run to the woods to escape a funnel cloud, especially when not at my house to go to the tee-pee cellar as everyone called my shelter invention. My friend's storm cellars stayed full of seepage water because of the sealevel elevation of the Southeast Texas Houston demographics. Even

some of my scarey silly friends hopped into their cars for safety as they perceived it, to try outrun the wind storm and also to find refuge from the bolts of lightning striking the ground; the insulated rubber tires would protect them from the streaks of fiery lightning or so they hoped and prayed. Some frightened neighbors also hugged the trunk of a big tree and held on for dear life, in fear of being sucked upward into the darkened sky by this giant vacuum cleaner of a cyclone. I just always stayed still and tended to ignore the high winds, giving it no satisfaction at all that I had even seen it.

Wind storms like to scare the dickens out of you; that's their purpose, you know. They can scare the pee-waddling out of you for sure. Thus, I just always stayed still, quiet as a mouse, and minded my own business when a twister storm blew inward. Besides, I was getting too old to have the strength to run away like I *usta-could-do* in my youth. And I was still sick as all get-out from the chills and fevers from malaria; I was limp as a dish rag from my malady. Consequently, I had no real choice but to ignore that windy booger so as not to get the ill will of Mother Nature rampaging all over the Texas countryside. Thusly, we real Texans know to do our best to try and get along just fine as could be, considering that we lived at the starting point of the Gulf Stream tornado alley pathway. I just tried to mind my own business as usual while Mother Nature was doing her piece of work on the Texas landscape. And you had better believe that I was on perfectly good speaking terms with Maw Nature or I would not be here now to tell you this tale.

Tall tales about tornadoes are never exaggerations enough. Just you experience living through one hellacious wind storm and your survival story will put mine to shame—the first liar never has a chance. As you know, tornadoes have always liked to pursue my whereabouts, but then that is another story for another good funning time for me to tell so that you will come back to visit an old man like me to hear my truthful tales of yore.

Tornadoes can't be talked about too much. You got to be prepared for those aggravations and learning as much before hand as possible is the best strategy. I always wanted to talk the story to death so that it would maybe stay away from me if that could be possible. Tornado clouds usually have rain to accompany them like a symphony orchestra has drums and brass band; the thunder and pounding rain really makes a big show for sure. Here in Southeast Texas rain forest of the Big Thicket, rain always follows or accompanies a good funnel cloud. But here in the Big Thicket area, the rain lightens-up so it can really see how to rain some more right down on the mess that the cyclone stirs-up. Even Mother Nature as an act of God needs to see where she is going or to see what she had done. You had better believe it too, for I would never lie.

Storms not only bring much needed rain but also fertilizer the green growth of the countryside. The bolts of lightning create nitrates and phosphorous combinations that mix into nitric phosphate fertilizer; more natural fertilizer is deposited in one half hour thunder bolt storm than all the artificial fertilizer plants in the world can produce all year. Thus, the good Lord knows that we need these crazy storms to feed all the green growing plants in the world. And that dismal act of God is what makes all the lush growth in the Big Thicket forest so unique; the storm proofed orchids grow wild from all the good sky juice so we get to enjoy their natural beauty afterwards as pretty fresh picked exotic flowers on our dinner table during thanksgiving meals for surviving the rampage. We thus

felt rich as a king ^{W. H. H. H. H. H.} with a centerpiece floral arrangement sent by special messenger from God's own handiwork after such a soul searching adventure with those dad burned tornadoes. Mother Nature usually shows a sunny face the next day after a cyclone wind storm, just as a bad child acts mean as hell and then grins to make it all right. The ferns in the deep woods even grew huge beyond my meager words, even so big that the birds could feel safe to build their nests inside them. And of course you already know how big the local trees grew back then, being so tall enough to fall all the way to bustling New York City. Bluejay birds especially built nests in the high ferns and they screamed all the time when a stranger or anything they did not like happened—by so they were better than a guard dog on the place—that's why local folks were called Jayhawkers when they hid in the woods from the government agents or were on the slide to avoid being drafted into the army—and I do mean the Civil War times. It takes decades for the complete word to reach all parts of the Big Thicket.

Communications in the Big Thicket moved faster after my old uncle Scotty came to live there. My old Unk Scotty accidentally did the whole communications world a favor by inventing copper wire; my old Unk had a copper penny that he and another local Scotsman were fighting over so they pulled with all their mighty wills on that one-cent piece till it stretched thin as they tugged more and more, holding on for dear life, to get their share of that metal. All that fine line metal made excellent telephone and telegraph wires so again my old uncle made a mint off his undertaking; he could always turn a lemon of a deal into sweet lemonade. Just like my old Scots uncle took a rest by leaning on his old trusty cane and the weight of his reposed body drilled a deep hole into the soft soil as an artesian well quickly flowed forth to this very day. I am thus so glad my old Unk finally decided to stay forever more in America; he had always visited our family relatives from Scotland here but in 1906 when I was a mere lad of a boy. The United States bank panic or depressions of that day as they were called brought my old Unk for an investment opportunity in the New World. Well, we took our first walk around Texas that lasted till 1909; I showed him everything real good like. Besides, I got out of school to do that good hospitality thing. If you don't believe me, just don't get your nose out of joint; you can look at my sweetheart wife Miss Ella to see if her eyes are rolling skyward like a pinball machine going into full tilt at the Balinese Room Club in old Galveston on the sea wall; this Bali named dive was the precursor of the Texas mafia gambling syndicate before they built Los Vegas into their world class act.

Now, you know if I wuz a real gambling liar of a man that Miss Ella's eyeballs would be rolling heavenward; her eyes would be constantly twirling like a one-armed bandit machine in tilt so you can surely now understand why I have to be such a truthful man always on my toes. After all, I am a good true-blue faithful born-again Texas husband to that sweetheart gal of mine. I might tell a whopper "dreckley". "Dreckley" is speaking Texan lingo for you non-native or uninitiated Texas folks. Dreckley to some folks means directly to follow but that ain't all the meaning there is to it. And it do means much more, such as soon as I can get around to it. Thus, everybody that is a true-blue Texan knows that "dreckley" is the day after tomorrow or something there-after so don't get your dander all up or I will have to put it in a sling shot for you. We old line Texans use this dreckley stuff on folks who smile a dung-eating grin like they are so smart putting one move over on us country folk; we ain't as dumb as we look or sound. And thus those uppity invading yahoos think they are better-than-God to trick us into believing their con-artist scheme fooled us hicks. Dopers are also good at pulling

our leg or at least thinking that they put a good one over on us straight acting jokers. This sort of con-artist thing is also done by jealous relatives who are envious of my hidden talents and oral abilities.

Jealous kinfolk can just about love you to death with their dung-eating grins. Did you ever love someone so much that you couldn't stand them? Well, that is the way my niece Elsie Taylor-Winniford was; she was also my sister-in-law and we had almost grown-up together, my being only six years older, in the same little burg of a town. Now, Miss Elsie was the best kind of a nasty-nice person you could ever meet with her ying-yang nose out of joint over the least infraction of her sensibilities while she was a real cat's meow onto your case (she was sensitive while you wuz a brute—twas the wrong big S word; her really being selfish through and through). Miss Elsie spoke very litte in the defense of others when not to her advantage. "The cat-got your tongue" was Miss Elsie's favorite baited-breath retort to sulking victims of her sly ways that could easily doubledog dare you to death. And I should know well as a favorite uncle's highly experienced survival rate at Miss Elsie's under handed ways. But you see I was an easy target for Miss Elsie because I loved her inspite of her harsh mean behavior—blood is thicker than water so I always went back for another bitter pill of her medicine. Miss Elsie used everyone sooner or later.

Miss Elsie used goodness to her own devious advantage; she could cook-up a mess-of-manners but used them all up long before letting the niceness get down to you—that was one back-biting response to Miss Elsie's crummy ways by the local two-faced friends of hers. Anyway, that pretty niece of mine was too hep of a high stepper to rear her own daughter little Ida Margaret—that little girl of hers was too much of a burden to change diapers. That little Taylor-Winniford kid of hers never had a chance for a good homelife by the likes of the high falluting Miserous Elsie. Miserous, as I already told you, was a clever slurred speech title of address that Black folks used on white folks who had displeased them somehow as Miss Elsie was sure to do most every day to those she encountered on a regular basis. The negroes had a divinely cunning but crafty manner to speak their mind with a public face that did not totally offend but was also not without a truthful undertone of acute roguish perception to get even for past wrongs in a polite style. I thus liked the high style Black folks used back in old Commerce town's Nigger Holler appropriately called my fiesty niece of a sister-in-law. Miserous fit her to a big capital T.

Miserous Elsie was indeed a good disguised term of address in polite society to this heavy handed relative of mine. Misery, though, was indeed the true or best expression ever used to describe that woman. Even being a mean wretch would not be an apt epithet for Miss Elsie when she was on your case like she always kept being on mine since we had children with the same grandparents; Miz Elsie feared that more money for a gift would be spent on my progeny than hers. That was the big bone of contention between us forevermore in our fifty-odd years of marriages. However, I am very grateful to Miss Elsie for preparing me exactly for the worldly response of selfish mean folks. Miserous Elsie taught me how to deal with snide people at an early age and thus what to expect from her sneaky kind. I use her as a good example of what bad people are really like; her type of envious folks are the bad seed sort ready to pick your bones to pieces just for the fun of it at the drop of a hat.

Miserous Elsie could high hat everyone so easily; she was big stuff and oh so pretty. But pretty was not her ways as I have said. Beauty is only skin deep

as the old saw goes. I sure wanted to skin that niece of mine alive. But I did love her despite all her distress. Miss Elsie always looked like a million dollars when she went to public functions.

The public functions worthy of her attendance were the concerts and dance parties for which Sam Winniford performed as the finest violineist of Texas. You would have thought she had been a Winniford forever born to that name; she was hateful as all rip when anyone misspelled or dared to mispronounce the family surname Winniford. Sam Winniford played his finest violin music on chartered passenger trains to Hot Springs, Arkansas resort outings. Many of the oil rich towns of East Texas chartered a car to make a sixteen coach train to the spa baths of the Ozark Mountains; the famous fiddler walked the length of the train to play his tunes and entertain all the good old sports on the leisure vacation trip with his gracious living style. Miz Elsie was always there big as life dancing and singing along to the fast tune or whatever. She was the pretty window dressing of the party groupies of her day. Miss Elsie never missed a chance to tag along, even on trips to Washington, D.C. to play for the president of the United States.

Trips to Washington, D.C. were usually to visit Sam Rayburn with whom Sam Winniford had attended old Mayo College together plus being of the same politico persuasion. Sam Winniford was a vote getter for his favorite pork barrel issue at the steak with no thumbs down or much debate to it. Miz Elsie helped-out at every whistle stop pig-track as we called all the small places with no town square or tall water tower. Sam Winniford had played for every president of the United States since 1894 when his cousin Adlai Stevenson I was elected vice-president. Now, that would have been some shindig to have attended. Those White House concerts were a yearly ritual pilgrimage till his death in 1959 at age 93.

The journey on that annual pilgrimage was a joy to behold. We got rid of Miz Elsie for weeks at a time; that was a mixed blessing for sure. Our old uncle Sam the fiddler played the best violin in the state for sure as he was so often proclaimed. And my little boy will varify my tale if you doubt my veracity by now with all the long stories that I have been telling for the sheer fun of it all. I don't have a mean bone in my body so I have no grudge to carry with all these funning good times.

The fun of watching violinist Sam Winniford play was a real treat. He had a routine of playing a fine classical piece that was ever so elegantly boringly proper to prove his talent. Then, we got a real sight for sore eyes when he would plop down in a straight backed chair to wrap his long legs around each other like a plastic-play-dough man with his six-foot-seven-inch frame contorted to the fast musical beat of a break-down piece as he called his own compositions. Now, that which followed was a real hoe-down worthy of the master. And Miz Elsie was in the middle of things like always as usual.

The usual Miss Elsie was the toast of the town and danced herself across this great country of ours like it all belonged especially to her personally. The world was her oyster and she ate it up, too, let me tell you. But my dear niece ran into troubles from the Bible thumping crowd; seems that Sam Winniford played his band at a big public dance on the town square in Commerce. Well, six local married couples got divorced the next week, all because they had danced so close, up next to each other's rubbing bodies to cause a sweat. Good proper folks were not supposed to touch except to hold hands while dancing. But those dancing

fools chafed-up all against each other to cause a holy hell friction rippling through the whole community the next day forward. And Sam Winniford got blamed for the whole mess; his music had called the devil to that dance. And the fiddler himself was preached to hell the next Sunday by the enraged ministers. The whole town was out to beat the band into hades corner for sure. The bass fiddler named Namon Anders resigned from the fiddlers organization and vowed never to play at a public dance again or straight to hell he would go for sure, according to the preachers who talked to God every day for sure. Miz Elsie was her typical flucey self by taking the side of God with the preachers to assure that her place in the seventh heaven was still secure. This was indeed a low blow when all the family clan did not stick together.

But our good ole cuz Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander came to the moral aid of violinist Sam Winniford and the family good name. Righteous indignation was all over the countryside in a big uproar that must have cleaned out hades and half of heaven as well. The good Reverend Doctor Alexander gave a mighty fine tongue lashing to everyone. And they all listened for he was the hand-maiden of Godalmighty himself. The Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander was president of the State Baptist Convention so his word was heeded as gospel. Why, you would have thought the great Jehovah Yahweh himself had spoken. Man, did those moss back goodie-two-shoes ever turn tail to go after some other unlucky sinners on their constant witch hunt.

Well, the fear of the Lord had been put on those witch hunters, turned around by the stroke of genius called Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander. The family was now on Cloud 9 but it all got better to put us on Pinkus Eleven. But Miserous Elsie came home to open arms because she was a dues paying or t'ithe giving good Christian religionist who thus couldn't fall from grace so all was forgiven and forgotten till the next time she could get her claws into us. We all had to act better than ourselves wanted to be around Miz Elsie.

But my little boy Bobby was better at being just what Miserous Elsie deserved from our family. He gave what he got from her with interest so to speak. She learned the hard way to tread softly around his remarks. My son used his lie detector polygraph machine type skills on Miz Elsie a lot. His little truthful tongue was fast as all sixty and he didn't give a flip about what others said as long as he could put some light on the dark subject. Little Bobby told his aunt Elsie that she was his favorite (he didn't say favorite what so she never figured that one out). My little boy said that goodie-two-shoes folks live in their last revelation-age-of-lessor-sin since they do not commit or break all ten of the commandments and thus feel superior to other's public sins. Religion was not Miz Elsie's long suit so she let my son rave.

My boy's truth saying does have its drawback; folks can eventually use the truthful words from your own mouth against you in a Socratic legal debate way for sure if they are clever enough. No good deed goes unpunished so do unto others as they do unto you was the quip my little son would crack with his small voice. That astute observation usually would silence the false pride groupies that felt better-than-God and full of public self-importance. That ploy held the mean spirited at bay for the time being.

Yet not a bad or mean bone existed in my sweetheart wife Miss Ella. She was sugar and spices so nice to me as long as I was on the straight and narrow path of her goodwill. And that is no fooling from a high spirited guy like me. My

sweetheart wife Miss Ella raised the children right; we attended every church revival in the Channelview community. Negro churches were also a major part of our attentive kindred souls' joys. But my honest-bright son Little Bobby was still in true-blue Texan form at being like a bitter dose of truth syrup on those local preachers—he would have made a good TV preacher guest host today. When prissy preachers asked my son if he read his Sunday School lesson, Little Bobby replied in true Socratic truthful form that he did not know just one Sunday lesson but instead knew the whole holy commission not to be arrogant and uppity about knowing the Bible verses; Christians must live the religion like Jesus did so don't bug others like me with probing inquisition remarks or so my son retorted. And my little boy saved the best rejoinder to last when still pursued about memory of the Biblical chapter and verses: "Don't molest me, man." Wow, did those old self-righteous wags of a poor excuse for a preacher recoil at the word molest, jumping like a buckshot-shy-jack-rabbit far away from my truth saying son. Thus, you can see how my little boy had a knack for putting sassy folks in their rightful place as he could work a sanctified crowd into a nervous tizzy like a walking-talking Barbie doll lie detector machine. That kid of mine was truly a chip off the old Scottish Taylor-made block.

That Scotchguard kid of mine had a deep sense of something like humor in his Taylor-made personality. He said he wanted to join the flat earth society but only flatheads can join he laughed with a deep sign. He even told all my old time who-raw-hiding friends without cracking a smile on his cherub face that he was going to be a great Texas farmer and thus would own the biggest Texas spaghetti growing farms in the valley; to grow spaghetti, a farmer had to let it stay in the hot Texas sun to get it well steamed by God's hand naturally before harvest time. Thus, we truly good Texas farmers can grow our food already cooked and ready to serve from the family farm fields. Thus, my son could have won state liars contest prizes with that whopper of original absurdity back in the good ole depression days. The big mouthed liars who lost wanted to ship that kid of mine out of his state of mind on the first flight of the Confederate Air Force freighter. No organized respectable liar wanted anything to do with this honest to goodness bright kid of mine. But even a good Texas sore loser would not want to exile a mere child completely out of heavenly Texas so they were all for waylaying that youngster of mine with some armadilloes near Amarillo as one wisecracking-buddy jested such fanciful tomfoolery.

That boy of mine surely did inherit some tomfoolery ways from ^{me} after all. But that kid got not one bad trait from his sweet mamma, though, who was the best peachy cream spicy good woman in all of ornery Texas. And that's what thoughts will do for you if you think my boy has any bad traits from his fine mother. You had better have another thunk coming or I will get my hackles up on the roof tops about that kind of injustice or way-out carrings-on.

The house top frame of reference was always a favorite place of mine to use as a way to change the subject when things got boring or aggravating. Neighborhood children who visited too long and wore out their welcome for the moment were usually told ever so nicely but quite forcefully when asking silly questions that the answer was on the house tops. And, when a ridiculous child kept foolishly interrupting as to where someone was, I would reply that he was on the house top riding a bicycle to death or that beats a hen a cackling on the wood pile. They soon got the stupid message and left me to more important matters as I would respond to their witless exit as that's very white of you now. Everybody, though, always wanted to know where my sweetheart wife Miss Ella was, so my stock phrase

of a response was, "Miss Ella is on top of the house beating eggs." That always got their inane attention put into proper prerspective for sure.

Getting folks's proper attention was not a difficult thing for me to do. Front porch family visitations with their oral entertainment was a joy to share before the idiot box television came into all the homes with its pandora's box of unimaginative ideas. Tis just a rehash of other folks's doings or sayings. All my Taylor kieth and kin were good at telling wild stories for fireside chats, but I was the best organized with my travel tale sagas. You see, I had to entertain myself first as well, so twas no need to bore yourownself in the process of getting the attention of the local neighbors. I can tell a story better than you can imagine. I am the best of my ilk or kin to tell a yarn or spin a fancy tale. Now, most of my relatives were better than anything alive to turn a dollar so they became wealthy in bank accounts while I just earned my supper with a song or tall Texas tale. I was as good at talking up a storm as my old Uncle Scotty was good at scaring up some money in a pinch, or just anyother old thing-ma-dodge that needed to be done in the way of finances. Just to show my quick witted entertainment skill, did you know that every entertainer alive in the whole wide world has a twin living in the Big Thicket forest of Texas? Well, they certainly do. The identicle twin is better than the famous starry-eyed twin and of course didn't want to leave Texas so he stayed home to spread his tale like I am doing, now. Yes, I am all the entertainers rolled-up into one, myself. Thus, all the really famous movie stars are truly Texans who lost their birthright by becoming expatriots to leave for the big bucks in show biz. Even Al Jolson has a look-alike brother singing his heart-out in the swamps of the East Texas woods, but he is content to just make Texans happy with his crooning words. Even the famous acting Barrymore family also fled Texas when Maurice Barrymore got shot half-dead for all his yankee talk against the Confederacy in of all places Marshall, Texas which was the Confederate capitol west of the Mississippi River; all those rebel generals living there got on their Barrymore case so those actors became expatriots in a big hurry. All the world is a Texas stage just waiting for some muddle minded clown to do his thing in public better than anyone else in the rest of this no-can-do world that resists Texan changes and trend-setting ways.

Texas ways are usually noticed world-wide in the money making facts of life. The big spenders of the world seem to come from Texas. But a real true-blue Texan is stingy like my Uncle Scotty. Ole Unk Scotty could make money when no one else could. My Unk turned the Big Thicket into a gold mine so many times without anyone really knowing it. He even got the place recently declared a national forest preserve by using environmentalist groups as a front to manipulate his own ideas into force so that he would have a permanent free homeplace to roam around forevermore. You see, that old uncle of mine had come over on the Ark with Noah so unk knows that he could just possibly live forever or near abouts if he just set his stubborn Scottish head to it. And, man, did he ever have a mind-set for doing the unusually impossible things in this ole life. That old man does not want to die and leave all his money to some unworthy spendthrift; dying was not so bad ole Unk always said as the thought of leaving perfectly good money to a no-account relative. Thus, Unk left his money to himself as his own heir. Unk was his own Number One son so to speak. Unk did this typical Taylor-made scheme so the federal government would never know the real difference of being himself or someone else. Ole Unk did all that life and death stuff on the Fourth of July so that a truly holiday facade or big front of patriotism would hide his true intent; it was a good choice time. It was July 4th all day long so that gave the old man plenty of time to accomplish his patriotic duty. On that freedom day, Unk had plenty of

good free daylight time to get through without losing a precious minute of his time-is-money fortune during that eventful day's dutiful hard work. My old uncle Scotty is still alive and well in the Big Thicket forestlands to this very day.

A day is not just any old day to a Taylor unless you make it so important that it can never be forgotten. I always do that sort of special thing with my long days without end. That's why I got married on Christmas Day; it was Christmas Day all day, but it was Christmas night all night long, also—figure that one out if you are dumb enough to try, so that gave me time enough to do my do. And thus most of the civilized world celebrates my wedded bliss day, or so I do say, when you can make your own special choice day like my own paw got married on Valentine Day. I would never have wed on half a day with no time to get it all done—I ain't no nincompoop for sure. Numbskulls do not run in the Taylor-made family. My family good sense reputation is why so many folks bear the name Taylor; numerous lazy no-account horse thieves took the name Taylor. They wuz no dumb bell when it came to wanting to look smart and self-righteous respectable so they just tuked an enterprising, good sounding surname.

Looking good and being friendly was our long suit as a Taylor named clan. And my wife Miss Ella was the best at keeping my reputation intact and up to par. Her family was the best at whatever they did so naturally I was soon elevated to her lofty spot. Well, that is just my pride rattling along now for sure. I do tend to talk a lot. I am a motor boat mouth, parting the waters of goodwill.

Talking and goodwill just naturally go together at outdoor parties. Everywhere I have ever lived, back yard parties are the rage; we had parties in the yard a lot or barbeque picnics as folks today call everything outdoorsey. My birthday was always a good time to feast outside and thus invite the whole family with the neighbors getting-in on the good times as well. My birthday always falls on April 17 as expected right on schedule. But every eleven years Easter coincides with my birthday—see, I told you that I was a chosen-one special by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The best time of all my name day celebrations fell on an Easter Sunday on April 17, 1938. Kinfolks showed-up from all over, even East Texa relatives made the effort to come enjoy some birthday cake or whatever noise since each brought a covered dish as part of the growing menu.

Birthday dinners were the joy of the family and friends. A truce was just naturally called at this festive time. That's how a lot of arguments get solved or settled and sometimes get started later over what did or did not happen at the gala event. Well, Miz Elsie was there with her entourage from Commerce town; Miz Elsie and I are just low down kinfolks, so she baked a cake that she would have loved to pitch in my face. I never had time or the inclination to eat a bite of it anyway. Of course, my big sister Opal appeared with husband Victor and Loretta with her new grass-widow divorce from her practical joke days on the Cesna fortune. Gleeson and Vincent Shaubarger also showed. My dearest precious mother was there. (But not my father G.W. Taylor ~~because~~ because he and my mom had had a major Texas sized falling-out disagreement—which is another Texan brag tale—that no longer held room for the both of them ever on the same premises.) Naturally, my sister Lissie Love walked to my place with all her sweet children. Dude or G. W. Taylor II and little grandson Trey Taylor attended with their blessed kids.

I was thusly blessed with more useless gifts than I thought possible to buy in the midst of the great depression; I could never use all the handkerchiefs and ties that would outfit a corporate president executive suite (and me with no job at all; all dressed up and no place to go was my dilemma). But my enterprising wife Miss Ella much later made quilt covers out of the ties and sewed dish towels out of the hankies. Of course, I lied through my teeth, saying that I very much liked all the gifts. Now, that was a bigger lie than all the tall tales I ever told in my long life going from pillar to post travels all over Texas. Well, it was after all my birthday all day long so we did have a fine time. I liked perco-

TAYLOR 66/66/66/66

lator coffee pots the best so I did receive a brand-new hand-blown glass carafe made just for me. But it kept getting empty so it must have had a hole in the bottom as I liked to tease the glassmaker when I sipped the top side dry. The home cooked fresh vegetables were hot as hell on the top side as I joked about grabbing an over-heated dish. But the official birthday cake was big as I was.

The official birthday cake on this day of days that was my Easter Sunday birthday as well had been baked by my sweetheart wife Miss Ella and her good friends. It was six feet tall and full of icing. It had been baked in a kiln, out in the back yard of a neighbor who made bricks for a living. The cake **must have** weighed a ton. The icing was whipped out of a big Jersey cow that ran wild in the community as a public juice factory for the poor folks to get free milk to feed their young. But my special birthday, being on Easter Sunday and all, let my family have the right to catch a little free titty juice from that wild cow, but that bovine milker got cold feet and froze her cream in the utter bag about giving her milk so freely; all we got out her was thick-as-eggs-milky-icing that just spurted onto that man-sized cake of mine. Or so I was told. I would not spoof you on my Easter Sunday birthday for sure.

Even the milch cow came to my birthday event since she was just over the backyard fence. Everybody enjoyed what we had to eat since beggars can't be choosers as my visiting out-of-work relatives so aptly stated while enjoying the freebies of my big birthday party that lasted all day long like old home-week personified.

That was indeed my birthday all day long. And it had started in the wee hours of the dark morning just to get ready for the relative crowds. My sweetheart wife Miss Ella baked free yeast rolls the size of bowling balls or East Texas snowballs depending on your experience of Texas winters. Man, were those rolls ever good and hot fresh from the oven of that kiln since thousands of folks showed for my name day event. The whole down-home bunch helped eat the goodies. Those fresh yeast rolls nearly branded my fingers like a yearling calf marked for life when I sneaked a big bite or as I would joyously exclaim, "That's heavy on top when the cooked-in heat made me drop one on the ground." Even the hound dogs found the dropped biscuit roll too heavy hot on the top to bite into and run off to eat under the snakey house. Watching those dogs burn their long tongues on a dropped roll was a mercy to behold, I celebrated so much that my get-up-and-go just got up and went. My tired was hanging out for sure at the end of this day long birthday anniversary. And I do honestly believe that this one-day long celebration really is what made me age the whole year's worth of growing to look older on that date. I surely felt much older the next day. The good times do take their toll. But then the homebrew or old houch that the good ole boys brought may have added that heavy experience to my feeling like a mare's-tail-of-a-wind-in-the-air. Took darn nearly a whole week to get me back to feeling my old self after all that fresh air Texas fun. And my wife Miss Ella was her typical holy-roller-than-thou self around me too. She never let up on my frame to quit the souse for good (it took another full eleven years for me to take the teetotal truth of abstinence on my next Easter Sunday birthday celebration on April 17, 1949). I commit special acts on my most special of all birthdays, let me tell you.

My special birthday appreciation gift in return to my sweetheart wife Miss Ella was not to worry her to death, or else. She laid the law down without ever raising her voice. That's why I had to join alcoholics anonymous to quit my long time drinking problem, but that was years away while I was still thinking that I was still young enough to handle the drinking problem; but that is another liar's tale tall story. I just wanted to wait until I was too old to enjoy the good drinker's life anymore before I gave up the good stuff. My head felt so big

or so ding-dong bell-ringing when I moved around suddenly the next day that my children could wheedle anything of a foolish promise out of me for them just to be very quiet and extremely still. I would consequently agree or consent to just about any old thing-be-dodge in order to have a little peace and quiet all the next week. Just between you-and-me-and-the-gate post, all I really wanted to do was sleep it off. I was drunk as a skunk English Lord on my nameday but I did manage to pretend that I was otherwise sober for the sake of good social appearances. Finally, darkness came to let me get brave enough to go to bed early and thus not admit I was soused to the gills.

Bedtime came slower than molasses that birthday time. The last one to bed is a rotten egg kindly announced my sweetheart wife Miss Ella, and that was all she said about my spree that drunken night. Everyone else had long preceeded me to sleepy land. I was dead on my feet and a wicked sight to see, ugly as sin as I have often enough been told ever since that lovely day. Every dark cloud of life has a silver lining as the old saying goes—that's why my sweetheart wife Miss Ella kept her trap shut to let me toast the whole world without my hearing even one of all her no-no's spoken; she just gave me enough rope to hang my own self like little tight fingers tying strings like love-knots twisted in a sweetheart hankerchief to her apron strings. Miss Ella just bit her lower lip that day while I flapped my jaws. But that special nameday is still my most memorial birthday celebration ever. And I still say the last one out is it, for me.

This special shindig birthday party in southeast Texas during the miserable Great Depression time was the last really big times celebration of my long life. We soon moved back to the family homeplace. A place called Commerce in the north-central part of East Texas near Dallas was our old timey touchstone roots; all our close loved ones resided nearby, even my low down Miss Elsie. Our big move back to home was on Labor Day of 1939. The Great Depression was finally relenting. The fine old house named Winniford Way, built by the grandfather of Miss Ella's dad, was being refurbished to look grande again to welcome the weary kin traveling souls. A new coat of paint did wonders for the old homestead. We thus got all dressed-up in our glad rags to go back home to Winniford Way.

We packed our raggedy things into a borrowed lumber truck that Victor Shau-berger was glad to lend us. We had to leave Nosey Lee the kitty cat who had just borne a little of kittens that the White family across the road reluctantly accepted. But the doggie Boots was held firmly in my little boy's arms; that ole hound dog rode all the way back to deep East Texas in that boy's lap or we would have left that canine also. If my sojourn life and sweetheart wife Miss Ella sound too good to be true, then so be it. My wife Miss Ella exists in all her prestine glory of my life only because I am a true-blue faithful husband fearful of losing her if ever I should fool around with some loose woman like some of my redneck yahool good ole buddies do. My sweet wife Miss Ella waits on me hand and foot; she still draws my bath water after fifty-odd years and lays my fresh clothes out to wear after bathing me. I could never run away on a wild hair because I don't even know where my own things are kept. I am on a love leash; I am her love slave, head over heels in love with this girl of my dreams so I just have to put up with her domesticating ways. You know, I fell in love with Miss Ella when I first saw her picture on Miss Elsie's mantle—that's why I can never hate Elsie for any of her meanness (she brought me the love of my life). And Miss Ella also saw the same love-knot in me at her first sight of my likes, enough to impulsively return her previous engagement ring back to ex-fiance Tom Drake who was twice her age when I walked into the parlor room of her fine ancestral home-place. My contender was off-limits to her heart after that. I won with a glance. And we haven't lost sight of each other since then.

LABOR DAY RETURN TO GOD'S COUNTRY

Labor Day of 1939 was a sight like sore eyes done seen Christmas coming early to us fully grown folks. We wuz happy as if we had good sense or no two cents at all to buy gasoline to get back home to God's Country. The look of the open road through the wilderness trail leading back home to a place called Commerce town. My family and me wuz more than ready to take the last look at this poverty row called home on our fly-by-night pidgeon holed premises that we had been anxious to leave far behind for years. This endless seeming decade of hard times called the Great Depression was long over due to cease and desist. Thus, Labor Day week-end of 1939 was our personal God-given liberation date from being exiled in poverty from the old homefolks back at Winniford Way homeplace (and to think that we were living down here in the land of opportunity or milk-and-honey, one of only a few booming economies around Houston during the world-wide depression that made foreigners from the rest of the world think we had streets of gold for sidewalks--guess my folks and me expected more rewards out of life since our hard-working ways usually paid off so well till now).

The hard-times Labor Day of 1939 was indeed a red letter day for us adults so you can imagine the jubilation of the children as well. It was a welcome change of something nice and joyous to finally come along to end this terrible Great Depression for us and the rest of the country as well. We wuz done packing before the chickens went to bed and long ready to leave before the rooster crowed the next morning at first light; we wuz heading back home to God's Country which for "us-all" was located nearby Commerce town. You know God's Country is the same for everybody the world-over; its's where the heart is or where you got "born-did" and you always wanta go back if folks there treated you half-way decent as a child growing up. But in Texas, God's Country is everywhere in our borders and has a welcome mat experience just awaiting; we good natured Texans don't never turn folks away, even though we might turn away from a mean SOB's weasel two-faced toothy smile.

We wuz all smiles going back home, let me tell you, back to the place we started from, the very heart of God's Country. Getting back home to God's Country was no major problem because my brother-in-law Victor Shauburger was a good man who loaned us one of his sawmill lumber trucks to pack my kids and personal belongings back into our heartland of happy awaiting good times (and we would surprise all our kinfolk because stamps cost too much to waste even on good news). Victor loaned us his best truck driver as well to bring that lumbering truck back. And he sent gasoline money along, too, as we learned at each gas station stop. Of course, old Vic was still the richest sheriff in Texas so he could well afford the noble gesture of getting rid of us, especially me. But he and my little boy would miss each other like crazy. Well might Victor have tired of some of my shenanigans or tomfoolery; my high spirited antics must have been a trail and tribulation on his good Quaker nature, a real test of his faith with all my good intentions of ~~an~~ humoured trickery. A grown man's mischievous activity is like a half-grown coon dog chasing his own tail in circles but not half so funny. Yet all my tricky behavior was just from the practice of having fun and not ever wanting to hurt anybody in the funning process. All my innocent intended fun that back-fired on me was when I found a pretty looking colored snake to place inside a shoe box, which I in turn put in his living room that was a circular shape in his nice elegant round house shaped home. Well, that serpent was a coral snake as pretty as you please that even had fooled an old country boy like me into believing it was a king snake; I had never seen such a sight like it before and just wanted to share the beautiful experience.

What an experience we did have. Poor old Vic got his fat self into high gear

and used a big stick to rid his home of that slithering menace as I soon learned to appreciate his consternation and extreme caution to remove the slimy serpentine intruder. You had to be there and see Victor's face to appreciate that funny episode. Vic only got the dry grins when that snake tale always got told, and he never allowed me to forget it either. And I would not blame him none for sending me back home to deep East Texas for safety's sake of the whole family survival. So, you can now understand why we wuz finally being sent on our way with a truck driver to see us clearly out of the Big Thicket forest lands. Wow, we were happy as if we had good sense to know better to be on our way home back to our home-place in all our glad rags that were holey to hell as could be from the long-drawn-out ten years of the Great Depression that pert nigh used up everybody's funds forevermore, or so it seemed at the time of all that harangue.

Everybody seemed glad to see us leave Southeast Texas cause they wuz all there to wave us good bye, yet they cried a river of tears enough to float a battleship down to yonder and back, just to make us feel sweet sorrow for moving away (now, that is the good Texas spirit to make you hate leaving a bad thing behind). At least my teary eyes were full of crocodile tears for leaving that malaria infested swampy place (But my little boy to this day loves that horrid place because some of his best memories are around those parts with his riding shotgun with the High Sheriff of Liberty County). Yet I was more than ready to get myself back to civilization again. Riding through the piney woods forest lands of deep East Texas in a big lumber hauling truck full of my own household stuff sure beat walking back home all to pieces. I was too old now to do much walking all over the state of Texas like I usta do with my old Uncle Scotty in the old days when I was much younger. They say that the legs are the first thing to go when old age is just around the corner ready to jump on a young man like a million fleas hopping on an unsuspecting hunting hound one at a time during a distracting dog fight that keeps his thoughts on something else till it is too late (as if it would have done any good in the first place to plan to avoid it). But my old Unk is still to this day living in the Big Thicket woodlands someplace secluded—his old age don't hurt him none in the least because he hides from it. Nothing can find that old man unless he wants to be found out about. Old Unk Scotty only comes out on the edge of the Big Thicket forest to buy or get a few supplies and see how the rest of the world is coming along with all its fussing and fighting that causes major world wars; he ain't yet got over the fact that the world did not leave good enough alone with the first great World War that was fought to end all wars.

The worldly life was passing me by for sure as it had all during the past ten years of this Great Depression. I was a backwoodsey homebody through the necessity of having no money to go anywhere. But I was not alone in this poverty; most of the local gentry fell in this category, even the rich were poor for a change. The whole countryside itself had really changed in upper East Texas during the Great Depression. You could see that basic change at just a glance; not much junk iron was laying around houses: no rusted out old cars remained in the front yards back then (we need to have another war on junk, judging by the looks of all the messy trashy places today that have strawn stuff all around). Folks had sold everything not nailed down, sold every piece of old iron and rusty tin that could be turned into cold cash. Old worn-out cars no longer cluttered-up the lawns of nice homes or even falling down shacks. The good ole boys had cleaned up, selling the metal for a few measley pennies or whatever could be gotten for the scrap iron; rubbish and salvage wreckage just disappeared to the junk yards. Not much wildlife was left roaming around either to prey on the chicken pins. The rabbits and wolves had all got killed and et up by the good ole boy hunters getting their much needed free food during the decade hard times years of the Great Depression. No loose

pets dared to roam the neighborhoods because they got made into hot tamales or some such concoction of a meat pie, for free of course. Cats on the prowl made a good stew, just like their squirrel cousins got cooked when caught and they all made pretty good eatings when you are hungry and money is very short to buy real elegant food stuffings, during this Great Depression, caused by the big rich of our own United States.

Food was about all that we had to think about as something good to hope for in our lives on this return trip to God's country in upper East Texas. The jarring of the lumber truck made you hungry or something else about as bad during all these hard-times days of the Great Depression; we got the daylights jolted out of us all along the long way back home to Commerce, Texas the place of my birth and growing up days. The car seat was like riding a pogo stick during rush hour traffic in a big city and everybody else that we seen in other cars on the road going the opposite way looking for better times that we had already left behind as more of the same were all being jolted by the bumpy roadway. We hit our teeth together and nearly bit our tongue that had to stay back in our mouth to avoid losing it like an Arab caliph cutting it off for some unknown blasphemy. My tongue was my greatest asset now that poverty was a way of life. I always could talk my way of most anything that was troubling me or about to get the best of me, but not this "Great Depression" could I out-talk or make it go away by speaking my piece to bore it to pieces. Nothing I said made any difference back then but that did not stop me from trying. But I had to hold my peace and keep somewhat quiet when the bumps came along or I could have been permanently disabled or left speechless forever. I still had my say, to break the monotony. Everybody watched the roadway very closely as if to spy some treasure lying in the middle of the roadway; we were prepared to stop for the least reason, especially if something tangible and valuable looking were spied on the pavement. We kept our eyes peeled for sure all the time.

The kids had the best place to see all the wonders and valuables that lay ahead. We had feather beds on top of the heap of the furnishings so we took turns laying on those 6 or 7 feather beds piled on top; we could cat-nap and catch up on all the sleep we seemed to be losing from the bouncing truck. No rain fell as we were in a draught as well as a dry spell of no money; it all went together for sure in these hard-times days and nights.

The sun beat down on the riders in the truck bed; we had to use old worn out umbrellas for shade and even tried to use a sheet tied to the side boards with a stick in the middle like an Arab sheik's tent but the wind from the road kept blowing it down and had to be held onto for dear life all the time; that was nearly as bad as no shade at all. We didn't mind the inconvenience though since we were able to be riding in a vehicle on the road to someplace else besides back to Channelview; we were on the go when most folks had to stay home because of gasoline money to motor about. The hum of the gas eating engine was music to our ears for sure.

The hot blistering wind in our faces really burned the skin but no never mind for that chaffing condition; we were riding the roads finally at long last again. Had to leave all the windows down and the wing flaps at an angle to direct all the air possible inside the cab; we were hungry for moving air that kept the terrible heat from seeming so unbearable. We were like hunting dogs with the blast of air hitting our heads all the time. And eyeshades were not a common thing back then. We had to ride with our eyes half closed or sometimes with only one eye opened at a time and then alternating back and forth to save on the eye burn. Only a big eye opener happening on the road got a full look or rated a wide-eyed look that the kids were sure to holler well in advance of reaching since they were sentinels on top of the truck but my wife Miss Ella always rode with them; she did not believe in children being anywhere alone since something could always go wrong to make a child take chances that lead to catastrophe so she was on top of that possible danger, to avoid any more bad luck coming our way during these hard-times days.

I talked to the driver to keep him alert as was my excuse so I finally just about ran out of ideals, never words though for they just popped out. I talked a blue streak about the news and how Hitler was on a tear.

I rattled along like an empty wagon being pulled by a worn-out team of wild horses from the sound of my own voice. My tongue was tied in the middle so that both ends could keep going full speed. I kept everybody in stitches from all the observations about life and the roadway curiosities along the way.

The roads were full of potholes or chugholes as we country folk say, even though I was city born and bred in the environs of Commerce which is called a hick town by the city slickers from the million-plus populated centers of industrial commerce. We wuz about half way home when we got as far as Marshall, Texas. This was old home town stomping grounds for the Taylor clan so I expounded on the olden days of glory around this neck of the woods in the heart of the Piney Woods country side. We stopped at the old Confederate Capitol building which governed all the Confederacy West of the Mississippi River as well as the state of Texas and was the record depository for the other southern Confederacy states, in safe keeping from the burning fever of the yankee generals. My dad would have removed his hat and stood for a full minute in complete silent prayer shielding his heart, for he was borned under that long-ago country's flag in 1862. We saw the sights for what they was worth before gassing up and going back onto the roadway; we wuz tired and worn to a frazzle for sure. We needed to stretch our legs and find or make a bathroom stop, especially the youngins. The sights in those days were a mess to behold; highway numbers and town with mileage did not exist so we had to ask perfect strangers where the road went or we could waste a lot of gasoline going the wrong way to Lord only knows where. We never knew exactly where we wuz, except we wuz still in Texas and not at all near our old homeplace yet. We always knew that we were still in Texas because the wind blows right up a Texan's nose when not in his own state so we wuz still enjoying the gentle breeze on our face like love pats on our skin. We stopped all along the way to get directions and to lollagag with homefolks who sat on their porches to kill the time since nobody had money to go anywhere and no radio to listen or pass their time; no work existed either so everybody was home with no place else to go. Some happy go lucky folks sang and danced on their porches that were long front galleries and a fun place when the rainy season started to keep folks otherwise inside and a good place to let the little kids ride tricycles or throw baseballs or just run wild and scream like a banshee while the grown-ups got some peace and quiet. We stopped and joined in on the fun when invited; we could dance a jig or two ourselves when the music was lively and even a good hardshell Baptist would wiggle their toes to the beat of the good times. Sometimes, we stayed the night when the jigging got real good and the folks were real friendly but we always stayed on our truck of household goods; we slept on top of the featherbeds atop the heap of it all and the dog Boots was always with us but never left the truck when we went to the bathroom in the bushes or wandered very far from the sight of the truck; that dog was worth his weight in food for sure; he guarded our things with a vengeance. Our new roadside friends or buddies liked to hear and see other folks who were worse off than they and to learn all the news from afar so my tales about the Big Thicket and my brother-in-law sheriff Victor Shamburger really peaked their interest for hours; folks liked to hear about my poverty and then to get all the details of how my rich relatives lived the good life and did share some with us, but were for some reason sending a driver to return my family to the Central part of East Texas.

The occasion did not often arise to dance on the porches since folks feared having to feed extra mouths. I just shot a rabbit or coon when getting the chance but wildlife did not abound as I soon learned or observed. That was the funny or odd thing about traveling back then, not to see wild things roaming; they had been et up by the hungry folks during that Great Depression. No turtles or terrapine on the road, no rabbits to speak of or wild dogs or a lone wolf even. The scarce food kept a hungry look on most everyone's face; I am just surprised that people did not massacre their enemies and eat them for food; no wild-hair yankees were here then with all their complaining and bad mouthing Texas like they do now or their sort would have been a vanishing breed for sure into some potluck Texas stew for sure. I am of course joking even myself for sure, but some good ole boys

would have relished the thought, especially if they took at face value the famous Jonathan Swift's MODEST PROPOSAL essay seriously like some Little Hitlers would do or even perhaps already do like the real full-grown original Big Hitler in Germany is now killing Jews for his own pleasure. Anyway, you just never saw wildlife along the roads or in fields for several years even after the Great Depression; they got et-up by the hungry folks like us. Even I shot birds out of the sky for a free pie, me, Miss Ella and the kids picked up dead shot birds to cook, cause we wuz hungry!

Carrion crow birds did not have much pickings on our trip back to God's country of north-central East Texas around Commerce. We travelled onward to Winnsboro and just north of town to stop at the old Taylor family homestead called Cherrywood which had burned from a chimney fire but Taylor kin still lived all over the countryside. Taylors always came back home to where grandmother Miz 3-M Taylor had thrown a whole yankee army off her place using her high-pitched Pennsylvania Dutch brogue to tell them fellow yankees of her to go to hell and also she stood-up to a shirt-tail sheriff's posse when coming to arrest her grandson Nimrod for killing the 9 men who shot his own father in a feud on the downtown streets of Winnsboro, with no arrest ever being made by that sheriff who was kin to the killers so a Taylor-make justice had to be effected by grandmaw 3-M. History was all over that place to keep us all talking way into the night remembering what was and what might have been. But the good homefolks there were nervous as a cat having kittens because of local politics again; several cousins were having a hissie fit over a new fangled thing happening in the East Texas piney woods. An ammunition factory or "The Bomb Plant" was being built around Hooks up near Texarkana; they called it the "Bum Plant" though when talking fast about the ills of it all. Seems that good farm land was being confiscated for the legal process called eminent domain was the political process used to buy the old landgrant places for the expressed purpose of ~~divulging~~ a way to do what even the Civil War did not accomplish completely by driving the landed gentry off their headrighted surveys. Even a bullet plant was to be built at Karnack as well where Lady Bird cousin grew-up so there was no end to what that blasted Federal Government monster would do to our private country land. Every good Christian cousin brother already knew that pure-of-heart prayers would maybe best stop a war but not ever stop the Federal Government dictates when passed into law! Anyway, you would have thought that ammunition plants were about to be built all over every county in East Texas and that every soul was about to lose the roof over their head. Taylors do not give up their land without a fight or big verbal bouts about the big bucks so they were ready to go to fist city for sure. But the U.S. House of Representative Wright Patman had married a fine lady from Winnsboro, a Connors so that helped pacify some matters when he explained the need to fight Hitler someday soon and by being ready with bullets and tanks that needed to be built here in East Texas by the best workers in the world, of course, being us Texans. And all the jobs would help end the Great Depression for sure. Work for pay would be nice for a change whenever such a day should come.

We always changed the unpleasant conversational subject of the meeting times to some old timey memories, just to keep from having a stroke or throwing a wall-eyed fit about politics that our little voices could not ever change in far off D.C. until the big rich bankers decided to buy influence on Capitol Hill to change the mess to their way of thinking like always. Well, we just talked about how our ancestors handled the good old days when their world was being destroyed by an army at the very gates or some such calamity of a shoot out on the public streets of downtown Winnsboro. All this rehashing kept us busy to the wee hours.

This visit was a good rest stop and a fine diversion on the trip back to God's country. We returned to our journey problems, getting back on the road to finding our way along the unmarked places that hopefully led to Winniford Way farm and to Commerce hometown. We got lost again as usual on the unpaved roads and ended-up driving far out of the way to use more precious gasoline that we did not really have the money to spare. We detoured over to Canton where the Trade Days flea market is held, since 1852 no less. We traded somethings nearly worn out for some

more nearly worn out stuff that was just different from our old things and also this made us feel prosperous and good again to be able to dicker for different stuff for a change. This brightened our spirits about good times being just around the corner or on the next road. We kept stopping to ask directions from folks who just wanted to talk and see somebody different so we did not get reliable information and thus ended up near Boles Orphanage between Greenville and Quenlin. John Boles was the famous silent era movie star and hailed from that area where his Church of Christ family resided as namesakes for that churchy orphanage. Not very many roads were paved so the dry season was the time to travel and also the bridges were rickety and swayed badly; the so-called FM or farm-to-market roads were well enough graded to allow water run off but no permanent pavement. This caused the truck to bounce a lot and our heads nearly hit the liner of the cab; the ride was smoothest for those sitting on the feather beds. And the dog Boots was soon placed there permanently because he ate too much of the table scraps or sweet potatoes or yams that were fed to the Cherrywood dogs and this caused flatulence or gas. We all suffered when the road bumps got really bad.

The truck so loaded was too heavy for most of the bridges so we had to walk ahead on the wooden bridges and test the load level; it took all of us jumping on the bridge to test the sway or groaning giving of the timbers. This further delayed our return trip. We even had to really detour around scarey looking bridges and thus we ended back at Como which was a suburb of Winnsboro even though we did not traverse the same roadway, I guess, since no signs existed to tell us. We did not return to Cherrywood which would have gotten the old horse laugh by the folks that we did not know how to get back to God's Country afterall. We, this time, headed straight for Sulphur Spring which was the courthouse capitol of Hopkins County and then only 15 miles from the farm. Surely, we could find our way this time. I was getting pretty nifty at following the sun since we were going westward entirely now and surely could not get lost among the shadows of the pine trees again; the red clay of Winnsboro turned to the black waxy loam that covered most of the land around the farm. The trees became scrub and marginal growth that just abruptly ended where the piney woods played out just 10 miles from Sulphur Springs, on the South edge. The scarcity of trees really made things seem bleak after all the hanging Spanish moss and plentiful growth in the Big Thicket and Piney Woods, all so close and yet so contrasted different. But we liked the way our old home stomping grounds looked after years of being away in poverty. The bayous had become shallow creeks and the sluiceways were ditches all dried up now. The nasty smelling sulphur springs water came from sulphur bluff water; the bluff just sluffed off into the water or slough formations. Yes, we were in God's Country as we knew it and thus liked it that way.

Nearer we got to Sulphur Springs, I then knew everybody who lived along the roadsides; my cousins came out to jaw bone and give a holler. The Clifton and Melton cousins still owned their farms that raised watermelons and peach orchards; my mother Laura Estelle Sullivan had a sister who married into those landed families and the sister who married a Steen was the most high faluting of all in fancy "silk stocking" row in Sulphur Springs; a Steen wed a Garvin and Miss Garvin was a fine spinster teacher at the college in Commerce making her branch-water kin to me and my kids as well as my eldest brother William's son Weldon who also taught at E.T. College. All the kin thought that we were better off getting away from all the smelly refineries near Channelview and Houston; the skunk city fowl factory air was an ill wind from hades or so the kin joked, saying that the clean air of North-east Central Texas air here was a breeze from heaven so pure and clean. I even showed off an armadillo that we had brung with us to let folks in this neck of the woods see and wonder at God's creations. No one had seen such animals or "animal-mules" as some cousins called the critters. The poor little armour plated thing finally died the next year from being eyed to death and that's no lie. Or else the natural cold water springs around Sulphur Springs tasted like rotten eggs, enough to turn this part of heaven into hades for sure. We visited my cousin Sally Robertson and ate a good meal; she had double yoked eggs and then back onto the road.

Back to old Black Jack Grove on the old King's Highway or Cameo Real from the 1688 era or the Road to Jefferson as us Anglos renamed the roadway that now bore the federal government nomenclature as Highway 67 (or modern Interstate 30). We could not get enough of the good hometown sights; the two-story Broach mansion was pretty as ever just 3 miles East of old Black Jack Grove or Cumby as now called. The Broach columned mansion had been a Stagecoach Stop, built by Silas Johnson who went to California Gold Rush and buried gold on the place that got him killed by his wife and her hired hand-soon-to-be-husband; that Johnson was related to the Winnifords through Susan Johnson Winniford from St. Louis, Missouri and all their Johnson City, Tennessee relatives. We reached the old Black Jack Grove of trees and turned northward onto the farm to market road in Cumby at the post office that led to the homeplace Winniford Way.

Roadway signs did not happen until you wuz fast upon them and then passed where you were going or else not able to read them for all the dirt on the sign often times shot full of holes or all the paint worn off the surface. Of course, we did not need road signs in this part of God's Country since we knew every pig track and rabbit run for miles and miles. Life the back of our hand, we knew where we wuz, now for sure. We wuz still crowded beyond words; the dog Boots was still sitting in my little boy's lap.

We did not have much room for ourselves by now so picking up hitchhikers was most unlikely since nobody had anyplace to go anywhere, with no money to spend for eats when away from home where the rabbit or squirrel stew was at least free and plentiful. We had side boards on that old lumber truck, to hold all our household stuff so the dog couldn't look out easy when on top of the furniture and this made for having to ride in the cab with us road navigators. We got waved at a lot by all the folks along the way because they thought it funny that a dog got to ride with its head out the window when hard working folks had to walk along. We must have been a pretty sight of oddity back then but also folks liked to see activity going on back then. Just being on the go was a great accomplishment for sure during this Great Depression. We must have looked like the lucky ones in this world to those poor folks still stuck in the poverty of their great depression. We were free-wheeling and scot-free or so it seemed to our way back home to the good life at the old homeplace named Winniford Way. We were no better off than when we had left in the first place to find jobs.

We had left in the first place because of the job offers around oil town Houston with its booming oil refineries. A refinery job was big success and a sure sign of wealth back in those hard luck days. But you had to have a legal address in that area the year before the Great Depression hit or else no employment so we had come to the land of milk and honey where the streets of gold waited for those with family connections. Victor Shauberger gave me work because I did a good job and made better help than breaking in a totally new employee and I made as much wages as I would have anywhere else.

This last leg of the long trek back to God's Country made me remember all the reasons that I left and then was so eager to return; this 30 minute ride was like my whole recent life flashing before my eyes. Besides, my wife's homeplace was running over with relatives on the dole. Her good old kind hearted dad would not deny any kinsman a bed and breakfast when returning to the old landgrant home-stead; their common demoniator of a grandfather Urbane Alexander who had been a magistrate during the Republic of Texas days around Honey Grove had more progeny than you could count in those hard times days. I just felt obligated to go find my own job of room and board when I might could relieve the burden of feeding my four mouths at his large country home that had become a hotel to the kinfolks. I also mainly got away from my sister-in-law and dear niece Else Taylor-Winniford.

Elsie always had her derriere in the air (tale over the dashboard is the old timey description for folks on a tear). Made me want to kick her keaster. Every dog has his day so what goes around will come back around. Pardon my moment of truth so my broadus is showing and that's no bohunkus to laugh your hind end off about as my arse is always the southend of a northbound chicken. I don't thumb my

nose at nobody's backside or say at your back what I would not express to your yacking face so your fanny is not what I want to talk about. My backside has been against the wall for finding a job for ten years now during the long Great Depression and my hinny isn't showing when I tell the truth about my relatives. I would never bore you with a dumb story be it ever so dull either.

This last leg of the long drive back home was full of questions from my little boy Bobby; he had decided that surely to God we were about to be back home at every turn of the road or every hill top where he expected to see the large old house named Winniford Way show its peaked gables and long gallery porches.

I was nearly hoarse from saying, "Not yet." I had explained till I was blue and black in the face. And I was tired of the same old inquiry so I told more of my suspense filled tales. I would do anything to kill the time more pleasantly than yammering about the next housetop being our final destination. Kids will be the death of a parent's patience yet.

We finally did make it home to Winniford Way, none too soon. The tall gables first peaked, and then the four gallery porches came into full view. The gate though seemed farther off than the whole trip originally staring had seemed; we soon heard the finest violin music in the world emanating from the house—Sam Winniford was playing his stuff after supper. The long porches were full of relatives sitting to while away the hot days after a pleasant repast at the dinner table. A total of eleven outside doors gave entrance onto the four verandahs. Each porch was fifty feet long so the place was overrun by kin. The front verandah had square posts or columns with a three foot set of steps—that ole steamboat style house was a pretty sight for these old sore eyes to behold. We were indeed home.

No one knew exactly when we were coming; we had not known for sure ourselves when we could get to use an empty truck to haul us home with a willing driver to come our way so far from Hardin busy saw mills. But good folks took advantage of any opportunity to take a jaunt in a car or truck during the depression. When I saw all those fine kinfolks on the gallery porches, brought a bit of moisture to my eyes. And it must have done the same for them because they wuz relieved that our load of goods was not a truck load of beggars passing through. Word of our arrival spread from the Eastward galleries all the way around the porches to the west exposure where the lawn games of croquet or croquet as the purist spell it was still ensuing while the violin music filled the outside air.

Naturally, I thought about the commotion of people or great activity of folks jumping off those long gallery porches to see us now were much like the day when the big yellow Buick in the old surrey house caught on fire. That big yellow Buick was a lovely gracious old 1929 roadster type with a mother-in-law seat in the far back that stuck far outside the doors of the surrey house which had to be left open all the time when the fine car was parked inside (the west lawn was strawn with a dozen cars when all the folks were home, looking like a church meeting parking lot). That fine car had been the last major luxury purchase by Robert L. Winniford just before the Great Depression had hit. So, by the time the banks had all failed or been closed down, the Winniford folks were really down and out, poor mouthing from sun-up till sun down. And thus by the time of the closed banks during the heart of the great depression, that fine yellow Buick was getting old and cranky too. On that late October morn that old car just kept back-firing and not wanting to start in the cold morning air. Miss Lynna was grinding away at the starter switch like she always did. She was dressed fit to kill as usual. Her tight fitting helmet hat with a sash across her dress with fringe on the edges made her look like a beauty queen winner which she was not but my own wife Miss Ella was a beauty contest winner. The smell of gasoline was settling all over the place. Her depressed old dad was sitting high and pretty in the extreme last seat of the mother-in-law's seat so that he could stay as far as possible from that dad-burned smelly engine (usually her dad walked to town to escape the fumes and loud roar of the cyclinders and too he liked to talk to his neighbors along the way to his bank in town). This early day, the dampness in the air did not allow the rich oxygen mix of gasoline to ignite the engine easily; finally, the starter turned the motor. But the engine back-fired again and again as it had at first. Only

this time, a ball of fire belched out of the pretty old yellow Buick. And then a steak of fire swarmed over the heads of the occupants of the old automobile. The motor was ablaze. And Miss Lynna's clothes were afire as well. Every hair not covered was scorched; the singe was complete, parched off all the eyebrows of everyone. Miss Lynna was beating her dress or bosom, to extinguish the flames on the now burning tassels of her fringed clothing. A major fire was about to be ignited by the back-firing engine. Eyebrows, eyelashes and all facial hair was long gone the way of charred dreams in this Great Depression with each poor soul looking like a smudge pot had been stuffed into their face suddenly. Even my little boy was standing on the wide running-board just to get a ride out of the garage or old surrey house as his joy of the day. His little albanian golden locks were burned clear off like a whistle to the skin, singed before he even knew what was happening. A wide eyed wonderment was frozen to his face as though such fun he had never seen before in his short life (that's the way kids are, to like excitement that could be the death of all the grown-ups). Well, the fine car and the whole home-place wuz about to be burnt up—once the surrey house of a garage caught fire the whole place with its 22 out-lying-buildings of the grande old homestead called Winniford Way would have sparked to the high heavens. Thus, my tired old father-in-law just rolled his weary bones backwards out of the blazing car, head over his heels onto the dusty ditch outside. I never knew that an old man could move that fast. Uncle Bob as some folks called their daddy shouted to open the side flaps or hinged doors of the hood which covered the long engine while he scooped up double big handfuls of the loose ditch soil nearby to throw onto the burning wires of the motor. Of course, little Bobby Boy and his aunt Miss Lynna scampered out of that singed stupor of theirs and held the car doorway back, to open the long side flaps of the engine covering. That scared bunch of folks stepped back to let Mister Bob Winniford throw with a great excited force the large handfuls of dirt onto the flaming engine; the fire was thus knocked out of the burning motor parts and the flames rolled down the sloping fender onto the running board and slowly died like a whipped dog, putting itself out, gasping like dying embers of a reluctant firebug gasping for its last breath (this firefly exhausted itself suddenly as it all had begun). The long gallery porches had been full of cousins watching but even they had hopped faster than a bunch of fleas at a dog convention to head for the better view of all the excitement during this pending disaster. Even Aunt Magg as folks called this mistress of the household came running on her sore leg, limping like Frankenstein with a full bucket of water with the cistern rope dragging behind her as she had drawn a fast bucket to run fast to the young blazing fire. The rope snapped through the pulley that was dragging on the ground by now. Uncle Bob Winniford then gratefully washed his dirty hands in the fresh cool water saying that water only spreads an oily fire so the soil was the best way to smother that blaze which had ironically had seemed to have a mind of its own and just suddenly decided to hop out on the running board for a look and then rolled the length of the big old yeller Buick as folks called the pretty car. Uncle Bob then put his head in his wet hands and moaned, "Now, the wires of the motor are burned to a crisp; what next misfortune will happen during this awful depression to use up every spare dime we have!" The repairs along with the tow job did indeed cost one-hundred dollars; the car later itself sold for only sixty-five bucks so that was truly a great expense. I just could not help but remember all that excited activity when I now viewed the family jumping like springs on their happy feet to come take a look at us arriving in that old worn-out lumber truck.

Our arrival was expected but not definite with a variable time of arrival. Even Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander was still there; he visited every holiday from Dallas or Big D. He was a big time preacher man in Big D Grande Avenue Baptist Church. He got new cars each year as a bonus and all sorts of perks or fringe benefits for his good works. That man served as president of the State Baptist Convention. Charles T. and my father-in-law were youths together on the old landgrant estate founded by the Republic of Texas magistrate Urbane Alexander who had died there in 1853 about where we wuz standing. These first cousins were also the best of friends from being childhood playmates. The Reverend Doctor

Charles T. Alexander had a life-estate inheritance to the old place; he could visit and stay there as long as he pleased but did not hold title from his grandfather, the old Urbane Alexander magistrate. All the kin lived on the family plot which totaled 22 kinsmen most of the time. That place was always like a family hotel. And historical ties or reminders were all over the place where a long dead relative had lived and worked.

Thus, I could not help but see history marching through my mind when I viewed our return to that family plot called Winniford Way. Little Bobby boy jumped out of the truck with his lapdog Boots leaping headfirst up that long driveway. My son was the next one to hop out of that lumbering truck and ran up the driveway just screaming his head off that he was home. He cried everyone's name in disbelief that our final destination had been reached finally. Home is where the heart is, as the old saw goes so this place called Winniford Way surely filled the bill where all the heart felt strings were tied. Labor Day was a truly symbolic time for us wayward kin to return as the prodigal. Hard work had put the old homeplace back into tip top shape. The old mansion was being pained for the first time since all the calamity of the Great Depression had begun in 1929. Even all the regular big wig visiting relatives were still there, that being time-honored violinist Sam Winniford and of course Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander.

But my sisters-in-law did not greet us with great joy; they went through the motions of hilarity. And my wife Miss Ella acted as though she did not notice the in-law troubles upon her return to the very house in which she was born. The in-laws acted as though they owned the whole darned world or was their heir apparent holdings for sure. Not even Reverend Doctor Charles T. acted like he was superior to anyone kin to him.

My wife's eldest brother Horace Winniford had married pretty faced Beryl Woolfe Ward. Missy Beryl could not pass a mirror on the wall without primping and remarking "I am the prettiest one of all; my mirror tells me so." Gad, that was enough to gag a maggot or stroke a heart attack victim out for sure. Pretty faced Beryl with her big cow eyes had huge bug eyes and a wall-eyed look to her pretty uppity ways; she had entered that fine house as a band-new bride only to inquire: "Where will you live now, Mrs. Bob Winniford? I am now the new Mrs. Winniford of Winniford Way, am I not?" That question still roars through my head. But the mild mannered mother-in-law Margaret Landtroop Winniford replied in kind: "My husband was born in this place and he holds the deeds to this property so you will have to ask him that question."

Beryl had a questioning look on her face ever since that day. Keith and kin lived in their own bedroom suite with an outside door onto a different gallery porch. The front verandah had square columns, wide and spacious, to announce the official entry way to the homey place. All 22 permanent residents of this communal family abode had their own private space galore when desired. A crowd of other kinsmen were also present for the holidays as visitors or free-loaders as Beryl called them during this great depression. All ages of family members resided in these halls of Winniford Way. But the true-blue blood line of hard working relatives who held this homey place together and made it the loving home that it was were not well. Everybody was sick of some kind of malady. The elders had cataracts but did not complain or ever mention that fact themselves, not wanting sympathy like so many attention crazed kinfolks.

Sam Winniford had the cloudy white cataract signs on his once steel blue eyes but he still played the finest violin music by memory. He made music that you could see with your good eyes closed.

And Robert Lee Winniford, my father-in-law, was frail and drying up from a chronic heart condition. He trembled when he walked and a good wind seemed to nearly able to blow him over. His speech was getting short and crabby as though something terribly sinister weighed upon his troubled soul. He was sick and tired of a lot of things and was now not afraid of speaking his mind about it.

And the lady of the house, Aunt Magg, was crippled from the stob of a hole through her ankle that did not ever heal but required Indian herb healing ointments applied every day. Never did she complain or make derogatory remarks. But neither

did she smile or laugh much. She had burdens and ailments that would take 20 years to finish killing her spirit that the Great Depression had started. The terror of the great depression was worse than the invading troops of the Civil War had ever been on our lives, to disrupt the family circle and destroy the economy so completely. No wonder that U.S. House Representative Wright Patman had charged in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that Sec. of Treasury Andrew Mellon had caused the Great Depression and thus should pay somehow for his dasdardly deeds since he got to keep his great fortune while others went hungry and suffered because of his trickle down theory of a silly dictum that benefits the super rich only. Politics was a main topic around the evening gallery sittings and everyone read both the Republican newspapers and the Democrat papers, to get both sides in writing as what was true or false about an issue. But we all knew that only the super rich profit from the laws on Capitol Hill. We were all sick of idle promises and only a war would get us out of the Great Depression. The homeplace was full of loud talk and discussion of the issues of the day. Even the sound of happiness echoed through the walls of the homeplace but no one had the joy to go with it; it was an empty cry of joy, something missing forevermore. Even Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander chuckled like a mother hen calling her chicks but he had the bloodshot high blood pressure look to his rotund face; he kept mirth abounding through the halls of the home but he did not feel the witty saying deep down either because too much bad economic times had remained for a full decade and that stifled the human spirit even for a man of God. All this sadness could not be hidden by the veneer of the joy of our arrival to the discerning eye.

We arrived back at Winniford Way at dusk. Paint was still peeling off the north end of the old place and that part still looked like the awful Great Depression itself while the Southern exposure or front entranceway looked fine as ever with its fresh coat of paint, to cover the facade full of family pride and all. Kin began jumping off like jumping jacks to come greet us. But we just saw all the happy times showing on their faces for right now. The truck driver helped unload things to spend the night that we would need first. The real job of work began the next day to store all our stuff in the barns until we could get our own place and a job paying wages of course. Victor Shauberger, bless him, hired Max to get us back to God's country safely and instructed the driver to go slow but my son urged going 80 to drive fast as the wind. And Victor in his big new Buick or Packard back in Hardin countryside of Liberty County chuckled and replied to my boy that 80 is the phone number of the local undertaker, so go slow to avoid getting that number instead of the high speed. (Yeap, phone numbers usta be only two digits when the gossip operators manned the switchboard). Victor and my son together went 80 on the Hardin roads in his new Buick until a deputy stopped them and shamed the High Sheriff of Liberty County for risking a little boy's life at such a high rate of speeding. But my son piped-up that he begged his uncle to go fast as the wind; why they blew the painted numbers off the auto tags!! And that's no lie, so help me God. Those two would miss each other on long official drives; they went everywhere together. Even Vic's old houseboat where they caught giant sea crabs and sea turtles along with an occasional jelly fish. My boy once got caught by the undertow current or rip tide, but God and his uncle Victor saved the day by catching hold of little Bobby by the toe and not letting go just like a snapping turtle holding till it thunders. Now, that's the under rated truth of the matter. We unloaded our selves first and then some boxes with clothes and bed sheets amid all the laughing and tear stained cries; we cried a river of happiness right there on the driveway. My sweetheart wife Miss Ella really had not thought she would ever see her old homeplace again; she thought she would starve to death first, saving choice morsels for the children to eat first. Heartbreak and worry had just about killed her in Channelview and Hardin depression days or so she said hugging everybody hard enough to break a dozen ribs. We were glad to be back and they were all glad to have us back, thank goodness. But everybody was sick like I done said (oh, I talk bad grammar so as to fit in with all the others folks like you). All the elders had cataracts; the steel blue had faded from all the hard times. My father-

TAYLOR 79/79/79/79

in-law could hardly walk to greet us; he had palpitations of the heart or a heart murmur; his wife Maggie had bad varicose veins. And Reverend Doctor Charles T. was fat as a hog, puffing with every move. Everybody looked like warmed over death for sure. But we were still glad to be back home even it was a chamber of horrors to look at or disaster waiting to happen.

No one talked about all their illness or aches, never complained for they were all too glad just to be alive and finally reunited as a family group again (really bad sick folks don't harp about their illnesses like the put-on "sorry-assed" or lazy no-good folks will do anything for attention or sympathy by crying out loud about a hang nail being worse than the pain of death itself for them, and they fake all kinds of ailments, too, as I should know). We all got busy the next day unpacking that lumber truck so the driver Max could soon return to smelly old South Texas Houston refinery country that seemed to be the sweet smell of success during this mean old depression. We stored things where our dog Boots could do a good watchdog job to look after them. Boots have never seen so many turkeys or chickens in the barn yard full of cows and horses in his life. Even the pet armadillo died of fright most likely from all the new critters at the old homeplace. The plague of stick tights or very small fleas inhabited foundations of the barns so everything alive spent a lot of time picking fleas off; the stick-tight fleas bit often with a ferocity that was like nettles or prickly-pear needles pricking you all the time. The chickens ate the black specks off each other like caviar delicacy or kosher delicatessen lunch time special. Our work was cut out for us all the time. And then we began to paint the big old house, to finish the job proper like any out of work relative like me should do to earn his keep. Painting was my speciality.

The Great Depression doldrums seemed over for sure when we could now afford to buy 45 gallons of paint just to go around the house one time with a primer coat. We all did the painting along; each pitching in to do something since payday jobs were still scarce and we had nothing to do with our time, with all day to do nothing. We did not waste a drop of paint by letting it run down the elbow or off the brush; every drop got onto the dry cracked boards of the house. The money supply was no longer all dried up for everyone; the rich Winnifords now had some cash; things were so cheap that no one had any funds to buy anything so don't ever let folks tell you that inflation is the real killer: better to have money in circulation rather than have such cheap hard currency prices that no one can afford to take advantage of all the good savings or low prices.

Homefolks were not as depressed mentally as they had been for the last ten years here at Winniford Way; times improved somewhat. Farm products were increasing in price and demand: cotton had gone up some and thus things were being bought for the vanity of the household. Looks can be deceiving though as I said before. The poor health now showed on the faces of the family. No one had a sparkle and hope seemed a distant thing even though laughter filled the air of the place. A pretense of happiness did help spirits better than lamenting like some dour old hag or typical doomsayer such as a preacher-man evangelist would preach you to hell and back again so that you would shutter yourself to death dreading life that was bad simply because you had sinned and God was punishing you with no having no job for that secret sin. This kind of junk religion made God into a mean SOB and none of the Winniford Way folks believed such tripe. Besides, we had our own church affiliation; plus, we had Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander on our side, even though we did not attend his South Baptist denomination.

Religion and prosperity though seemed to go together if you believed all the good people of this land who said that God would not let the sinful profit. The bounty of the land was indeed increasing with cash markets, even the cows at Winniford Way began to have twins. One cow had a two-headed calf born on the place but a jealous cousin came with a shotgun and killed it, "to put it out of its misery" was the excuse but really done out of jealousy because I had contracted to sell it to a carnival act for its showcase (that double kin cousin feared we would profit from the freak calf so in the name of God he killed our golden goose for sure; we did not need any enemies with that kind of goodly kin around). Could have made a mint at a side show carnival. But all our everyday things were just that kind of double good luck at the farm but seemed twice as good to be back in God's Country

TAYLOR 80/80/80/80

and breathing clean air with no oily smells like back in Houston town.

We felt lucky to be back home in God's Country. This long over due reunion was goodness personified. We hugged and kissed till our pucker and arms nearly gave out when he met long lost kissing cousins and childhood friends. But the children Little Bobby and Sissy Lynna Estelle were the happiest to be home since the old homeplace was their favorite haunt; they had missed Winniford Way the most, like the old home dog named Heck that ran away once only to crawl back wagging his tail. We wuz all like ole Heck coming home for good now or so we thought we wuz, in high cotton back home for good until more bad times came along.

But for now, we wuz happy as if we had good sense. We unloaded that lumber truck faster than you could say Jack Robertson but of course we had 22 pairs of helping hands fast at work. We got settled down in no time flat. Wuz we ever tired from that ordeal of unloading. We all got ready to party when suddenly the eldest brother of my father-in-law died.

Norvell Winniford died and the biggest funeral in years broke the monotony. His second wife was Minnie Tarrant Clayton Winniford; she and her widowed daughter Effie Clayton Bishop lived in a small house nearby. No one wanted the widow Minnie to stay around town. Relatives were ready to do battle for aligning with the bereaved widow. But that is quite another story that ripped the family apart for good or badly depending on the involvement of the kin. But the parties did finally return to the old town once called Black Jack Grove but now named Cumby.

The richest woman in Cumby was Aima Moss Vick; her beauty shop kept a cash flow going but her gold digger skills paid the best of all. Aima could get her hooks into a guy with property faster than you could swat a fly on your breeches. And, man, could she ever catch a fly! Aima stayed highly respectable acting; her dad had been a church elder and one of her sisters married Tillet S. Tedley who was a big time preacher and rich church song writer who lived to be a hundred years old for a big national TV show celebration at Boles Old Folks Home. All that I know about this is hear-say—I heard them say it! Or like a good politician who is good at fooling the public by being uncommitted as well as those who should be committed, takes a really terrific con artist like me and Miss Aima to succeed.

I had to git cracking back into the good life of telling my tall tales back in my old stomping grounds of Commerce town. I had to call on my creative imagination to help myself out. As Shakespeare said so well, "If you don't believe my tale, then I will kick yours." This advice inspired me to get going. The autumn rains came so I had to get slogging through mud again but this beat living on a desert like what nearly blew my sweetheart wife Miss Ella and me away on our long delayed honeymoon when our eyes nearly muddled over or that covered up the Red River near Amarillo. Life was getting back to normal again for us.

The home reunion and then the funeral wake for Norve Winniford had just about worn out our lips for talking and kissing all the "kissing cousins." We hugged and kissed till our pucker and arms nearly gave out. We were finally glad to see all the kin we had been so glad to get away from in the first place; that's how homesick we were. This reunion was wonderful, better than not being there at all for sure. All of us had missed Winniford Way, like the old dog Heck that ran away only to crawl back wagging his tail when coming home. We wuz all like old Heck coming home for good now or so we thought we wuz here to stay. We got settled down in no time flat. But wuz we ever tired from that ordeal. Then, I had to entertain everyone by relating my experiences back in the Big Thicket woods of Liberty County; I was not really ready to remember all the things of our exile as I called it from the homefolks but I had to go on with something to say. And what I knew best was all the funny things that done happened to use with a wee-bit of exaggeration all thrown in to spice up the dull details. I told my tales just to keep peace and not have to start a dancing contest while I was so tired because the homefolks were all ready for some kind of fun times, either to have a fiddle dance or to be told my tall tales or lies as they called them. I was too tuckered out to dance so I entertained them dancing fools of kinfolk by telling my Channelview experiences in exciting and fun times, better than when they really occurred, for I was not laughing so much back then for sure. Of course, Miss Lynna could help me out since she

had visited several times and knew the lie of the land well as I did (the lie of the land was an apt description since the "lay" of the land was too mild a term). She always came the week before Christmas, to bring us all the presents for the children back then since she really was ole Saint Nick herself. My children never wanted for xmas candy and do-dad toys since she brought the frills while we barely provided the essentials. Miss Lynna started the chatter-down memory lane that would entertain the hair off a dog; she told about driving on the sandy beaches of Galveston Bay and nearly stuck forever in the soft sand; she had a voice that told all the scarey and exciting things just like they happened when she saw the weird oddities of the Gulf Coast area; she could write those same feelings into her letters too. She should have been a great author about the family tales.

The whole Taylor family delegation went along on the auto tour when the regal Miss Lynna visited; she looked like a queen with her long neck, slender hands and narrow long feet on her six foot frame and acted like the Queen of Sheba or actually more like the sainted Queen Margaret, the wife of her ancestor King Malcolm III of Scotland. Anyway, Miss Lynna was down to earth for having fun and drove her own car down there to visit us; she had a Big Yellow Buick convertible; her long hair blew in the wind like silk. "And the wind always says Lynna Winniford when you listen closely," laughed the elegant Miss Lynna (oh, yes, she called herself Miss Lynna for that added to her own mystique of once having been married and yet not called Missy, but ladies of quality Southern women get called Miss or whatever their name like Miss Ella for my sweatheared wife even long after being married and being even the mother of several children). Now, Miss Lynna drove her fancy car real fast on the sandy beaches just like my son Little Bobby liked as he usually egged the driver to do; his white cottony hair nearly blew off his head and I always kidded them that his hair finally turned dark-brown because it got the dickens blown out of it in his aunt Lynna's fast car and also when going ninth-to-nothing with his uncle Victor who was sheriff in a big-fat-hurry to see what they could see as soon as possible. Little Bobby's hair also turned colored because the shadows from the clouds in the sunny sky got caught up in his hairs and stayed put; now, that is what I told them all for the good Lord's truth. Well, Miss Lynna drove fast but she wisely stayed behind the lead car when driving to a new place like along the coast line or on country lanes in swampy South Texas. Miss Lynna followed behind the lead car of my sister Opal in her Terraplane Auto that began to backfire like crazy; flames shot out of the tailpipe like the mouth of hades speaking a warning for going so fast yet the big yellow Buick just sped along smooth as silk. We had to stop often often to let the rear end cool off and to change cars for my dear old mother to change cars and ride in Miss Lynna's Buick. On once such stop we saw a dead turtle that had been killed at sea and now washing up on shore; its hard shell was busted clean through like an axe had been taken to it, so a big ship must have run over that creature; it was dead as a mackeral with flies swarming all over it, making a hayday out of that corpse. We did not linger long because of the smell. That stench must have reached Houston some 55 miles away. That turtle head alone could have filled a number 3 wash tub, now that is large or my name ain't Tom Taylor. We drove onward just to see the sights, whatever they might bring.

Boliver's ferry was the next event of the day; we nearly sank on that boat. We drove onto the ferry boat and was first out with the big yellow Buick bumper sticking over the edge and then the Terraplane with sister Opal was abreast just like the working hands aboard indicated us all to park, only a chain marked the edge of the boat there from the lapping water. And then a big school bus full of students going to some band function sped up beside us. Then, the whole ferry boat tilted downward and water rushed up to our knees like a tidal wave coming in. My Little Bobby boy scampered up the coattail of his Aunt Opal like a monkey climbing a banana tree for sure; he was scared nearly to death of the water anyway and that did not help matters none for sure. Twas a good thing that his aunt Opal had gotten out of her car to see the sights of the whales swimming by and to show him the big creatures of the watery deep; some saw the whales as dolphins so who knows which they may be till this day. But the ferry boat stablized and just rested deep down into the lapping water. Then, we ever so slowly moved away before my little boy

Bobby realized we were sailing along toward the far other side. As if by magic, the land appeared to be moving away and the wharf had begun to move backwards seemingly to the little landlubber Bobby's mind or so my son assumed; he then dug his nails into the flesh of my arms; I was hilding him by this time so I know what I am saying; that boy had grip. And then we saw dolphins that everyone of us called whales swimming and jumping high as if to entertain us specially for this event; they thought it funny that Little Bobby was all excited or scared silly so they performed for him as I explained to the little scared kid of mine, the little tyke being all up in my arms for fear of the rising water again. Bobby liked the school of fish idea as I explained their habitat in the deep blue sea that they all went forward together as a unit in schools so to speak. Then, we all began to have fun without fear of the next calamity whater it might be; no use to worry over spilled milk or to fear another spilling of the milky way through life.

Fun was the order of the day when Miss Lynna visited; we drove to San Jacinto Monument where the battle defeated Santa Anna and thus established the Republic of Texas government; we got a piece of bark from the oak tree where Sam Houston lay wounded or so the history buffs always said. We then went on to the tall oblesque itself, to climb the tower but we took the elevator instead to the top when sister Opal paid the fee; the height amazed us all but was put into words aptly by my little boy Bobby when he saw the parking lot far below, "I want to go down there and play with all those little cars," chirped my son holding his arms out toward the little tinsey autoes. He was ready to play, not afeared of heights like he was nearly scared to death of the rising water. He was ready to go get those tiny cars.

We were all ready to leave to go for some lunch. We stopped at the Devil's Kitchen to eat the lunch special and to get somemore bananas on the advertised special that hawked "Boneless Bananas for sale." We got some for sure. My daughter Lynna Estelle was becoming quite the little lady so she was quiet and genteel with her favorite aunties all around; they doated on her for sure. We went crabbing on the far side of the beaches; Victor Shanberger met us in her convertible Packard, a 1936 vintage model. We threw in ~~lures~~ with bait when the tide reached us or rushed ashore and then we used big nets to catch the large crabs whose bodies were bigger than a formal dinner plate. But several always were fiesty and ran away fast as a turkey on a Thanksgiving Day shoot contest. Well, one crab got loose and seemed to have my little boy's name on him; that crab ran straight for that albino headed son of mine. The more my son ran, the faster that crab went directly toward him; they raced across the beach like marathon runners going for the gold (and the gold was the golden locks of my little boy who had the presence of mind to run for the old Packard; he hit the running board with a pow of force like a shotgun sounding and then ran on up the fender and jumped into the back seat to safety. Luckily the 4 doors were shut or that crab could have driven away with that boy of mine. Needless to say, we caught that crab and stewed him good for our lunch.

Steamed crabs are the best when fresh; my son vouched for that. Victor Shanberger knew how to do every thing just right for beach parties; we then all went on board his houseboat that was docked up one of the bayous. We stayed the night there, getting sea sick from the sway of the tide all night long and then being serenaded by all the frogs and mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are kinfolks of humans because they buzz our ears fast and proclaim their kinship by saying couzzin in our ears as their sweet nothings seem to say. I killed a buschel basket of those cousins for sure that night. Then Gleason Shauberger arrived with fresh supplies; he ran the sawmills when Victor was not there or me. Vincent Shauberger also made his appearance; he was the heir apparent so all the girls ran after his rich self when his father the high sheriff of Liberty County was not looking out to warn him of the gold diggers. Huzzies can smell a rich kid half a world away and go to him like a swarm of mosquitoes after their kin at night, and this is no lie.

I kept telling all my lies until another car arrived; it was full of more of the same too, fabrications based on truth. In fact, the next family kinsmen to arrive was Robert Ellis from Florence, Alabama. Cousin Robert was coming to Texas to inspect his citrus crops around Harlengen in the valley; he was tightfised or about as stingy as my old Unk Scotty Taylor who was still living in the Big Thicket.

Cousin Robert Ellis came to inspect his citrus orchards and made an enjoyable time of it all by visiting relatives along the way; he dressed poor as Jobe's turkey. He wore overalls, the Dickie brand, with a dark suit coat over the field clothes; this hid the aspect of his fortune in the bank while traveling on the road via a common bus, usually the Trailways bus lines which was much cheaper than Greyhound; Trailways usually had old and worn out school busses painted greyish. Cousin Robert Ellis dropped down to the Houston area to visit us briefly and then spent his lengthy time with his first cousin with whom he had grown up on the old Ellis plantation in or near Florence, Alabama. The Ellis citrus orchards helped pioneer the Ruby Red grapefruit variety of citrus; Cousin Robert Ellis was a great help to boost the Ruby Red Grapefruit industry and he was an ex-patriot of Texas in reverse so to speak, coming to help harvest his cash crops. He wanted to see just how bad our hard times during the Depression was down in Southeast Texas. Cousin Robert just passed through and never came back to Houston as I know. But he did continue to visit his cousin Maggie of his youth. He was a first cousin to my mother-in-law Margaret Landtroop Winniford; all her kin stopped by the Cumby homeplace on the way to visit all the other relatives up in Oklahoma or down in Houston; the old homeplace called Winniford Way was like a motel or hotel for relatives only. That way or family custom kept us all on the latest poop or all the good gossip within the family plus getting to see everybody in the old flesh and blood. Robert Ellis was rich as croesus; he owned the Ellis-Herston plantation settled in 1820 and thus all the citrus orchards down in the Valley of Texas. Thattightwad of a stingy-gut man rivalled my old Uncle Scotty from Aberdeen, Scotland. Robert Ellis carried only a small sized valse that was worn to a frazel for sure with his overalls looking ever so poverty stricken. Poor as a church-mouse for sure. He rode the bus everywhere for reason of saving money and to get to talk to folks and thus learn the feel of the countryside that he was riding through as most passengers traveled only a few dozen miles rather than a thousand miles as he did. He always stayed close to the bus when stopping for the comfort zones to use bathroom and buy sandwiches; he did not wish to get left behind. And too Cousin Robert Ellis liked to talk religion with folks, since he was an elder in the Church of Christ to spread the gospel while traveling for business purposes. He always stayed ten days or so at Winniford Way on the way down to the Valley and then after harvest he came back with fresh fruit by the baskets fulls from Thanksgiving until Christmas or sometimes New Years after his three daughters married and had their own children. Cousin Robert worked his fingers to the bone doing whatever needed to get done around the Winniford place, not a lazy bone in his body when a job of work needed to get done. He was no hayseed for he gave television conferences later when such things became the fashion; he advised the viewers on how to save the money once you had it; that man had the first dime he ever got. I can bet you that much for sure. Parsimonious did not aptly describe him, more like pennywise and not pound foolish in his skimping way of living life with his lickpenny lifestyle. He made an artform out of saving money and then finding ways to avoid spending much cash when out on the town or on the traveling road. That man would have made a great Treasurer of the U.S. Treasury.

Saving money was a way of life for the wealthy but all of us poor boys had to find ways to get by without much cash which did not come our way at all during that "Great Depression." But we were all happy as if we had good sense or much dollars and cents, let me tell you. And that had to be enough for living the good life back then; we invented our entertainment by laughing about things and telling jokes or jawboning all my old tall tales for the heck of it all; we as a family and as a group of friends got together to work as a unit to repair our houses or paint a barn when it needed to be done; we all worked together fit as a fiddle, too. In fact, the Winniford family always went the rounds together to all the cemeteries where all the kin over the decades were buried so we went to plant trees and hoe weeds on arbor day which to us meant May Day for sure. We went to Lone Oak Cemetery to work off the graves of the Ellis and Landtroop kinfolk at Sunny Point when Cousin Robert Ellis visited as he wanted to see where his Texas blood kin were laid to rest for the ages. We scraped grass off the grave mounds, for a clean slate of hard pan dirt was the vogue back then, not a blade of grass was to grow on a grave.

A hard working farmer who had fought the battle of grassy fields all his life would not want grass on his eternal gravesite; would haunt his death days while any living relative who knew his disdain of grass lived would work-off the grass (this was a sure sign of the farmer class to have bare earth all around his gravesite). Well, we worked those graves like they wuz our own or about to be. We sang and yoadled up a storm, looking like a dust bowl of the 1936 vintage quality when we got going. Sam Winniford played his finest violin music for us to break from the rest; he never liked to work up a sweat or do farm chores so he had to be the finest at something in this life. Took more energy to rest that it did to do the work but we were happy with all the sweat of our brow all over the place when we got finished. We got it all done in one trip, to spruce-up the cemetery where the Oklahoma settlers from Texas had lived when first leaving Florence, Alabama area so the aging kin returned to pay respects to their elders planted at Sunny Point Cemetery in Hopkins County of Texas. But all the blood kin from Florence felt that Alabama was still their real home yet they met at Winniford Way as a substitute for the real thing. Collins Wilson certainly was one cousin who liked to visit with his son Welcum Wilson; Collins had two sisters who lived on the same road as the farmhouse Winniford Way so we really did have big reunions, just whenever relatives happened to come by on their way to someplace else (Matte Wilson Benton and Lula Wilson Baber were the sisters and first cousin to Margaret Landtroop Winniford). Everybody was welcome to just appear on the premises on the spur of the moment; we did not stand on ceremony to arrange a visit prior since we were the real ceremony of good times personified. The world was our oyster to have fun; and we did not even know it back then. Little did we know that someday even kinfolk would get too uppity to visit each other without an invitation first. I do think that television and air condition has ruined the social graces of folks by making folks want to stay inside plus newer houses not having big long front porches wide enough for folks to stop and visit while being outside to be cool during hot weather and still not minding being civil to anyone who walked by. I see modern folks becoming less civil all the time and much less human all the time to each other.

Being civil has its draw backs let me tell you. Too much of a good thing can nearly kill you. Well, some branch-water kinfolks can take advantage of you such as Horace's wife Beryl Ward Winniford; she thought she was the prettiest thing alive since bubble bath salts; she would rush inside the house with her bug eyed enthusiasm squeeling for you to do something laborious for her such as get me a hankerchief from the shiverrobe in the side room and then she would stop at the full length mirror to admire herself, saying: "I know that I am pretty because my mirror tells me so and so does my brother and sisters." Now that is some nervy woman, having the gaul, to admit she is all wrapped up in herself and that made her her own worst enemy at that. I had to sit directly across the table from her and thus watch all her facial antics of self ego centric expressions. That was enough to turn a cast iron stomach like mine even. But I just smiled and lumped it for the sake of good manners since I was a guest in my in-laws' house at that. Beryl had the biggest bug eyes in the world and was wall eyed to boot; she thought she was pretty as a picture (her folks as she said constantly told her so but she never had won no beauty contest like my sweetheart Ella and maybe that was the envy and big problem with Beryl all those years). Sam Winniford was another bone of contention; he played that Stradivarius violin for his own ears only unless he invited you to sit in his presence so he fiddled all day long for his joy and expected to be ignored, yet the music sailed through the air for a miles or so and we had to hear what he liked, not the jazzy stuff of her fun loving nature. Even too much of a good thing can get on your nerves after a while; Sam wrapped his long legs around each other like a plastic dough-man and tapped his toes to beat of rhythm. He was the main show to watch, not just his perfect pitch classy classic music to hear. But we all got tired of him on rainy days when having to be all closed up. Good manners sake made us all be nicer than we wanted to be; thus, we wuz nicer than ourselves normally. Good manners required that I was only half-way angry and was just next door to being furious about what life had done to bring us all together like this. Just wasn't worth the time of day to get mad at such a tolerable

woman like jealous Beryl; "drickley" would be the time to get down in the dumps so I had to put my best foot forward again as usual when around kin folks. We all wanted to run away or steal far away during the night.

Thieves too shied away from Winniford Way homeplace, not daring to try and steal late at night. Mainly because my mother-in-law Aunt Magg as all who knew her called the old lady, stayed home like a guard dog with a shot gun, just as did Great Aunt Becky Alexander stay on guard because of her lame foot and to protect the hidden stash of gold coins earned during the Civil War. Aunt Magg with her lame foot and all kept close-by to eye the place. Even Miss Lynna could shoot a wolf with a turkey tom in his jaws (and the wolves came each morning to steal a full-grown turkey for their breakfast) at 500 paces slap dab in the heart so that it would continue running into the waiting pack until all the spurting blood soaked the other wolves that in turn went into a feeding frenzy to fight each other to the death (Miss Lynna knew well what she was doing to kill a dozen or so more of the marauders on her turkey pens that eventually did put her out of business though). Miss Lynna just wounded to death the killer wolf that went back to its pack to die but did not know it was dead on its feet till too late. But one set of close neighbors were thieves and stole corn late at night; Lynna put a silk thread over the hinge to test the point of entry; she was sitting there holding a shot gun late the next night and fired into his trembling butt with buckshot when he fled as she shouted warnings about his soul in peril at his fine Christian Church but all he had to do was say an extra prayer and all was forgiven for him to start over again like always. Also, had another neighbor to steal gasoline, siphoned from my car so I placed water in the mixture to fix his little red wagon; his car bucked like a wild horse and then just stopped running; I even told him that nitro glycerol was in the mixture and would explode if shaken up very much; he learned his lesson from me. Everybody enjoyed my true tale of this gas stealing as I told it with flare as I did all "my lies." I made my sad tale a funny but good story telling event; no one wants to hear a sad tale for long. In fact, a sad song doesn't care who sings it. I took my woes to town, to Commerce town in fact.

I went to town to see my old time buddies that I grew-up with in Commerce; the old Liar's bench was still full of spinners of tall tales. Tell me a lie was the greeting one old salt would extend to another to sit a spell and talk a blue streak to pass the time or shoot the breeze. Getting newswed was a joy; the KKK or Klu Klux Klan was still very active, especially some kangaroo court action by the good ole boys to keep white wife beaters on the defense or run. Something drastic had to be done to keep mean old peckerwoods in line. I toured old Nigger Holler or Happy Hollow as the liberals call the old haunts of town or sometimes called Hippie Hollow from the 1960's terminology; the bleeding heart liberals now call the Negro ghetto part of Commerce Happy Hollow; they want to be the Hitler of the English language to rename all things and not joke about things to correct them but instead be mean and self-righteous like the Republicans do when getting ready to pass a bad law against the working middle class yet saying this is for your own good. Enough blame to go around when demeaning Republicans and do-gooders. Makes me want to go back to Scotland where all my ancestors came from to escape tyranny in the first place. Maybe I will go to old Mexico. When I am in old Mexico or just barely south of the border I hear music everywhere I go. That is a happy seeming place with all the poverty and injustice obvious to the naked eye yet full of music like my heart always is over flowing. But no one ever sat on the Liar's Bench in Commerce with such aplomb or success as my Uncle Ike Taylor who finally had written his own tales down on paper for posterity or some such future preservation. That's where I learned my artful trade of story telling so well at his elbow. We could chew-the-rag all day long if the gossips would leave us be. The gossips though always could out talk us with their lies told and believed as gospel; a gossip can tee-hee all over the place when getting the last laugh at another's expense or just stand with a straight face serious as a judge to fit the occasion. Gossips always said that I got nothing in my noggin because I am head strong like that old Uncle Ike of mine and thus do not bend to their brain washing slurs to hate everyone they hate or dislike. Gossips can't stand to be ignored; they want rhetoric

all over the place, strawn about, on a subject of their choice; hit dog always hollers the loudest when verbal combat gets started. My little boy was not popular with the gossips; he was a quick study and did not suffer fools lightly when they misquoted facts or construed them to fit their devices; my little Bobby Boy had a photographic memory like me and he was smart as a whip. He had pipe dreams of making the world a better place by telling the truth all the time (nothing bothers folks like a good does of truth syrup). Better put that truth in your lying pipe and smoke it till kingdom come. I tried to be a good example to my children but that would require being better than myself so I just prodded along. I remember all that I know so well because I tie a string on my finger or hang a knot in my nosegay handkerchief (now, that gets your attention where you live). And that beats a hen a cackling on a good egg laying day for sure when you say the wrong thing to get egg on your face. Or as my Cajun buddies talk when hard-pressed to say something: "How y'all are?" That about sums up my idle talking. Me and my little Bobby Boy walked all over Commerce town just to see what we had been missing all those years of living down in South east Texas around Channelview and Hardin County Big Thicket forestlands. We walked up and down the brick streets of Silk Stocking Row named Bonham Street with its fine mansions where the "Got-rocks folks" reside in splendor. They got rich by being very clever and real smart to figure out ways to make a buck and then figure how to keep it is hardest of all. Just as my frugal father-in-law had an ingenious way to ease money problems; he wanted to charge a fee for air-rights over his land like mineral rights go down to magna Chine, then upward mobile rights to the sky-as-the-limit should also belong to landgrant property owners. He sent a bill even to the airline companies that buzzed his house. Once a dirigible or Zepplaine nearly hit Winniford Way housetop gables so he fired-off a hot letter of billing to them! Kinda of like royalty checks for oil rights one should charge fees to traverse over one's head. The airships sometimes have things to fall off and drop to earth so a regular compensation should be provided for us earth-bound souls all the time since the sky could be falling just like scared Chicken-little said it would. Could be the death of us all sooner or later. Death is a part of life though, but I ain't just dying to experience it yet. Yes, death is an important part of life just like unfinished dreams at night time slumberland. Death is insured by the money-makers of Wall Street but not the sacred air-rights of planes in the sky over your property so something needs to be done about that omission; the nerve of insurance companies making laws to force auto owners to carry coverage on other fellow's car called liability is a swindle beyond words of imagination to figure a scam to finagle funds from hard-working folks who are guillable to fall for that trick but then I am one of those ignorant-fools. But I am not hidebound or stingy enough to keep my money while the mercenary geniuses like Robert Ellis and my father-in-law keep their money to themselves. I should be more money-grubbing like a good Republican banker. Too many folks though fuss about money in their marriage being spent on the wrong things such as trips and parties rather than paying home bills on time. Me, I pay my way as I go. But you have to get up early in the morning to beat me at your own games even; I don't fall for scams often since my good wife of a sweetheart Miss Ella approves all expenses first. That keeps us solvent for sure. We are too busy tending to our own business to gossip about others.

All the verbage fuss-budget stuff of Bad mouthing everyone to make your own self look good is the stock-and-trade of gossipmongers who are bad as whoremongers. I am good at the no-nonsense rubbish better than most folks so don't insult my own intelligence by talking about my kin folks or good friends to my face and not expect some flap back so just cut your own nose off to spite own face. I began to encounter more of the old complaints that had driven me away in the first place, more of the "I do not know crap" in life when confronting the gossipers; they deny all words they spread when two or more good folks challenge them. This kind of flack makes being an orphan seem a good thing.

But I was still so glad to be back home near Commerce town after we trotted ourselves all over Texas's half acre. I would never be talking through my hat or be a blow-hard so listen carefully to all my gab. Tis a hess of a mess not have an audience to hear your tales about old times (even though I am still young) about all the past days in your hometown such as Commerce.

I never did anything but accidentally on purpose as I fled those gossipers who had to bad mouth others to make themselves look good; I never gobble with the turkeys when I can soar with the winning big wig birds. I knew it was best to get far away from all those fuss budgets so I jumped into the car and headed for fun loving Keith and kin, driving like sixty to get out of my mad fit. The car drove good. I pressed the gas pedal to the floor; I floor boarded that foot-feed or accelerator till the speed-oh-meter indicated 90 which was the telephone number of the local undertaker so I slowed down, not wanting to make an appointment with the funeral parlor for sure just because of a mad fit at what others said. I didn't yet have the earned cash money to pay for a funeral and besides my children still needed a daddy to pay for raising them. I just couldn't let them be reared by strangers who might help out my sweetheart wife Miss Ella. Like I said, no one else was going to rear my children if I had any say; my children had more than enough role models at the old homeplace named Winniford Way. All those visiting cousins provided multiple role models for my little boy and tom's girl; 4 mothers so to speak and 7 fathers to watch over them, to tan his or her jacket too if getting out of line. The old family homestead named Winniford Way was home to any cousin with no place else to go like home for the wayward kin; 26 relatives resided there during the Great Depression and 8 or 9 always in residence in those halls of family welcome. It was truly a family commune ahead of its time as a hippie stop-over. But a bountiful larder was the drawing card as much as the vast labrynth of rooms in the rambling old mansion. The garden produced more than enough vegetables, plus butchered hots and fresh killed beef as needed right on the place with eggs and chickens to fry at the drop of a hat. And the hospitality was genuine and plentiful also for moral kin.

No longer was I poor relations as sister-in-law Elsie who was my niece liked to call me when she could get me in a room full of kin. After all, I was a hot shot railroad man about to get a new job since the war in Europe was going great guns and needed our helpful products. At last, I would have a regular job again after 9 years. I took my anger out on a cigar that I found stored in an old chest from the good ole days before the depression and I snoked like a smoke-stack all the way down to the Commerce town railyards. I met all my old buddies who wanted to talk the leg off a jack rabbit for sure.

All those old man jack buddies who had just got jobs themselves with the railroad were so cocky and so full of themselves the all was a real egomaniac; I vowed never to let a regular pay check do that to me. But then after all folls are only human and old Dale Dupree was the most venal human that I ever knew. Pink Dupree also had a job on the run to Texarkana where the log jam on Red River once clogged the water flow, even 50 foot trees grew in the middle of the waterflow under the soggy logs. Now, that was the northern edge of the Big Thicket wilderness place to get lost like my old Unk Scotty had done. But the extreme northern edge of the Big Thicket went all the way to the edge of Paris, Texas town when I was a boy in 1910. Now, I would not lie to you about a wild bunch of trees growing all over deep East Texas, now would I if only I could or knew how!!

Texarkana was fast becoming the land of opportunity being so close to Arkansas, or helf in both states plus that big new army ammunition depot being built there. God wanted war and fast or so all the doubting Thomases seemed to be saying since that was the only way to end this awful or dreadful Great Depression. But it took time to apply for one of those new jobs so I had to kill time by talking to all the big liars in Commerce town.

The liars bench groupies in Commerce all wanted new tales so I got the center of attention or spot light as long as I could jump right in with whoppers to best the worst of them ornery liars. So, I just told the truth and they thunked that I was lying up a storm to suit their pickey tastes, so I just wheted their eppetites with my life experiences down in Cannelview around Houston during those depressed years. One big lie always calls for another so I held my own for days on end. No money earned just the idle passing of time. Some of those peckerwoods went around all the time playing pocket pool and other such foolishness rather than kill respectable time for all the depressed guys in town.

I even got to rehashing ole tales about the restaurant when my Unk Scotty first visited me in this country from Scotland. My tales were so good that modern society

has started using them as the gospel truth; that's the way that reportage in the newspapers has become. Politicians had rather fight one another in the press pages that settle major problems; two wrongs never make a right but then that is politics for you. Justice never stood a chance when the well-connected use influence to get their way in the governmental process such as lawyers proving that their client is not at fault by keeping testimony from being presented like the murder case of pretty Mrs. Kelly in Commerce who killed or poisoned her children so she could run off with a younger fellow; she got off scott free. Money does not always mean that the rich buy influence since my Unk Scotty is too stingy to spend cash on anything; he is a tightwad for sure and a pennypincher from way back. My Unk only spent money to make much more money like opening a restaurant. And the who-raw or funning-up my liar's bench listeners about my big restaurant out at Marfa, Texas on the hot desert going to California along old Highway 67 told about the restaurant having a self-serve food bar; the salad deli bar was heaped into new-fangled ceramic plates with divisions to load up the food in small servings. Then, a flat fee was charged per plate; all to be deposited in a cash box at the end of the line. This food lane moved fast like an assembly line at Ford motor car plant. Efficiency was our middle name for sure so there was no room for a bungler or sappy person to slow things down; all the jerks were weeded out and sent home to become jugheads or drinkers on their own time. None of that horsing around was tolerated at all. "Shut up or put up was our motto for work-brittle ways in that restaurant and thus all of our imaginary servings techniques became commonplace all over America by now.

I told my liars bench tales for days on end once back in hometown Commerce but did take a break to go to church of course. Public repentance is good for the soul and the mourner's bench is the best born-again experience to show human nature at work. I should know since I spent a lot of time on that bench as well. I was like a monkey at a zoo on display before all the good folks in town to view, my favorite sins being disclosed for all to talk about later in privacy of their homes.

Don't get me wrong; I knew right from wrong. And knowing is everything when you have a choice of having fun or staying home to being dull. So you know which one chose me. I took the fun route. Monkey business was my long suit.

And speaking of monkeys; well, the zoo at the Commerce City Park was once very flucey and big-time acting before the great-depression got its goat so to speak. Well, I was hired to feed and care for the zoo animals in return for free rent in a leaky old shack that eventually became the city library building and then became a maintenance building when the elegant old post office was sold for a dollar to become the main library building. Well, I talked about my monkeying around the zoo, seems that my old buddies hadn't heard about all the many troubles that I had since they wuz off worrying about feeding their families and missed those good times of mine that nearly caused the death of me. I fed that monkey whatever was handy and from me that hairy critter ate it all, liking it but not one bite from anyone else. I even let the rascal outside of the cage to bathe in the rinse water on laundry day; that monkey was a character like a human; he liked to roll up my shirt sleeves and hunt for cooties or something to pick from the hairs on my arms. That monkey loved me like a brother or something else nice for sure. But my little girl Lynna Estelle one day came outside to watch the bathing and she put her arms around my neck like the sweet thing she was. Then, that act infuriated that jealous monkey into a reacting fit like a whoring girl friend for sure; that monkey bit a plug out of the calf of my baby girl clear through and then the monkey swung into the tree tops and evaded us for the rest of the day, throwing limbs and acorns like bullets or bombs. That monkey chunked like a chapion. I finally got that monkey business settled by a tempting banana. Never again was that monkey allowed out of the cage. And the bitten place turned green even after kerosene or coal-oil was poured on it; the poison in the teeth nearly killed that child. I soon had to go find work, by moving first to the Houston area and while I was gone the monkey grieved itself to death for me. The city soon after went completely bankrupt from the great-depression and sold the zoo at a loss down the drain to a carnivil act that came through town. Now, that is the truth if I ever spoke it.

Everybody kin in the family and in that end of town got pretty riled-up over the monkey business of biting my little gal. And so did I but I got blamed for letting

it out of the cage. Rednecks have to blame someone for all the ills of life and laying a guilt trip on you if their best ploy of all. I did not dilly-dally around about leaving that zoo job. Time has not yet healed the wounds of that experience, even my little girl has a deep leg scar ugly as a mud hen till this day.

The next bad experience happened with a polecat or skunk. Miss Ella, my sweetheart, always said I never did anything but accidentally on purpose, while driving the car so fast on the way back to the country homeplace Winniford Way that I ran over a polecat or "runded-over" a civet cat. I was skunked for the next month of Sundays, let me tell you. That civet cat smell was my perfume. That skunk smell was a worse stink than the wordy squabbles I had left back at the house. The skunk smell was so bitter tasting that I could bite a barbed wire fence in half for sure. I stayed outside a lot for that month, only a rainstorm washed me clean enough to be around civilized people. A really bad storm blew in so violent but the next day was all sunny like a bad-kid throwing a temper tantrum and then smiling to make you forget the evils of the day or night before. That's the way God's force of mother-nature has to strike you down and then prop you back up for more of the same stuff.

It really was nice to be back at home town Commerce as I said before. I was busy flashing my smug pretty-please smiles around town just to prove that I was ready at a moment's notice to be a good ole boy again; a real homeboy back in full swing. I could razoo all over the place on a lickety-split dare. One poor ole soul was so sick or ill he couldn't sneeze without seeing God and I was nearly that bad off while the skunk smell was all over my skin and clothes that had to be burned; we had to soak the car in vinegar and soda caked on the sides of the fenders for days. I did my bit to visit and to run errands for the sick or shut-ins in town.

A lot of illness got caused by the Great Depression stress that killed the living spirit in so many good folks who felt shiftless when they wuz able-bodied enough to work if a job had existed while the employed few at first called them lazy bums for having no jobs; that is the way conservatives treat those who are unemployed. Thus, the effects of the poor times told itself in the sad faces of the jobless; folks still had short arms and deep pockets or very thrifty ways of being afraid to spend a penny even if they had it after half of the work force got out-off with no job and no cash benefits. Nothing to do was the silent order of the day and the liars bench was the main stay of cheap entertainment for most guys. Great story tellers were muchily appreciated since no beerhalls existed if one had the money to indulge their blues. Money now ruled society as we poor mouthing boys knew.

And I could turn a good mouthy phrase. The only thing that had more appeal than a spinner of tall tales back then was a good whiskey still; moonshine or good bottom land brew was the rage back then; the old mountain lightning might knock your socks off or literally strike you dead as a hammer when some silly meathead gulped too much too fast. My stories were no flash in the pan tales since I included real stories about everyone and everything in town that we all knew, to end with a far-out twist of fantasy for laughing sake. My old Unk Scotty would occasionally make an appearance with a wagon load of home brew from the Big Thicket stash he kept ever so secret from the revenuers and income tax people who wanted a tax on that liquid elicir to forget your troubles. We could tell when old Unk was a few miles away but yet still a coming ever so secretely; we heard him whistling and singing. He liked hillbilly music or country-western as it is called today. He loved American country music because it told ancient ballad style tales like the old timey Scottish songs back at his childhood home did and he sang to the top of his lungs. This loud noise disarmed the authorities who figured he had no liquor for one so obvious. Of course most of the impoverished teetotlers fell off the wagon when old Unk arrived with his fresh stash of moonshine. You had to plunk down cash to get any good stuff from old Unk, his being frugal and all. No credit ever given to anyone, especially someone looking like Tobacco Road hard times. But he did trade things or barter for something us poor ole boys had for his liquid refreshments; he was not heartless, just avaricious or mercenary like a Republican banker for sure. For crying out loud, no one expected to get credit to buy illegal goods in this state of mind hard times. Or as old Unk would say, "Who in the Sam Hill are you to expect me to take you to raise by buying you your brand of poison?". Now, old Unk knew his shit from

shinola for sure in his business dealings with God fearing people who don't always pay their honest debts when given the chance to do you in.

No one got something for nothing from old Unk Scotty. He worked hard even at his advanced old age whatever it was and thus expected the same from others. Old Unk arrived late evening or at dusk when God's light was just disappearing. Liquor sales best happened later on the waning hours. "It is midnight and getting darker all the time," announced old Unk when he saw a lawman going around; he could smell a sheriff a mile away and always got his stash sold PDQ to the eager beavers buying. No one gave a tinkers damn about what the law dictated about drinking the good stuff. We had to get our jollies as cheap as possible when we could. No law can legislate morality, hard as the sadistic do-gooders try to make you as miserable as they are. I was glad to get back among my childhood or tin pan alley gang of old friends who felt like I did about things. We hung out at Professor Irvings's old Texaco service station with a feed store in the rear end on Liveoak Street. Everybody who was anyone came by for a cup of coffee or to whittle away time on the long bench out front; we could gas the time away. Ira Knight stayed the longest; his negro hands descended from his family slaves worked his farm land; Ira made 45 cotton crops from the back-end of Prof Irving's feed store and gas station headquarters on Liveoak. George Robinson worked for Prof Irving and thus played pranks on us all when he could. George Robinson reported his antics regular like clockwork; he said John Sparkman got married because he was hot enough that he could have a whole baby by himself. The gang played pranks out on the townfolks such as at the Wheatley Jewelry store, an elegant place even though Dee Wheatley Junior was also a railroad man; we sneaked inside while Dee was in rear of store and hid under the front counter and when an elegant well-dressed lady came to look at jewelry, we flatulated. The flatulence stifled the place and the lady slapped Dee's jaws and left without a word. That prank was nearly as good as using the KKK sheets to hold a kangaroo court action by us good old boys to keep wife beaters on the defensive; we just tarred and feathered those husbands who got too liquored-up and then beat their wives with no reason or not. Also, tarred them when not paying honest debts and yet they had the money to spend on foolish things to take trips so we taught those old deadbeats a thing or two. All this was enough to kill a weak spirited soul.

Funerals are the best fun of all; funerals are for the living. And grieving really is for ourselves or the audience, to release a flood of tears for our own loss, not the deceased's plight since the dead are long gone from this life's worries. I enjoyed the wakes at the houses of the dead most of all; got to observe whether the bereaved were truly grieved or just glad to own the house and land of the dearly departed. Everyone ate a lot since food was brought in by neighbors and then the playing of the violin for dancing and telling tales in the back of the house from the far front parlour where the casket was on display and everyone cried a lot when up there viewing the body. The children always had a good time playing games with the long lost kin who came for the funeral. Kids did not have to mind too much and could run wild as an Indian if they chose to.

But my wife kept order easily with our two children. Kids never sassd her, no back-talk for long if ever. She kept a switch, a little hickory tea went a long way in discipline. And it didn't keep her worked to a frazzle either to keep order with our children or other's kids. We always drove in from the farm to attend a funeral.

Driving to Commerce from the farm meant traveling through Holley Flat where the low creek beds provided dens for pole cats. That was skunk city and smelled to the high heavens, bad as when I got sprayed by that civet cat my car ran over. All our Holly friends and branch-water kin Holleys hailed originally from Holly Flat on old Farm to Market Road 275 going to the Sulphur Springs highway, turning westward to go to Commerce where he usually bought groceries and general supplies rather than from other nearby towns.

Commerce town economy was slow as malosses with no one having money to buy many things that were foolish. The college provided about the only cash flow source around. But all the local gossip matrons hated the institution because big city boys came or attended clases and then seduced their local girls either to marry and move away or else have bastard kids. The college was their favorite thing to

hate even though it brought money into the community during the hard times. Guess some folks have to bite the hand that feeds them verbally at least. The railroad still employed some men but the roundhouse had been moved to Tyler so the dilapidated buildings were now falling down around the old tracks. Trucks had become the way to ship things even in Commerce. But I was still trying to get on the extra board work schedule so that I could get my old job back when times got better. The goodie-two-shoes folks had never left Commerce during all the great-depression bad times; they prospered like always; they said that God caused the depression to punish bad folks for not tithing enough to build fine churches in town and thus do God's work. And that I was the most evil for not joining their congregation since they could not fall from grace so their brand of Christianity was perfect. No wonder that was such a popular reprobate religion where you can steal a fortune and then become born-again and then steal some more and not ever have to make retribution, yet be a perfect Christian as long as tithing and attending all services when the church doors are open. God sure has a wild sense of humor to let some religions stay in power so long and remain to do evil in the name of God. Yep, God has a terrific sense of humor; that's why he made so many of them religions.

I go to church but not to the gossiping ones and I pray a lot for the mean spirited ones who use goodness to do bad things. But more bad luck kept hitting me when the gossipers just kept getting richer and healthier; I had tooth troubles; a dry socket had to be scraped out later after having a rotten tooth pulled. Seemed that everything I did turned out wrong while mean folks get richer. But I just kept on walking around Commerce town seeing my relatives and friends.

My little boy sure enjoyed walking around Commerce town to shoot the breeze with his grandfather George Taylor. His granddaddy would walk and point out all the old places where the original Taylor wagons had first stopped when coming to the prairie here to build a new town back in the early 1880's. My dad was a walking encyclopedia of facts about who lived where and what they did back then. He was good at what was going on way back when; he would point his walking cane to the very spot on the ground where they had first camped and then tell the kids more than they cared to know about the whole shebang. Ole Doc DeJernett's house faced the school that ole professor Day ran; all those old places were considered junkies since only brand splintered new houses were considered ritzy and fancy-dan enough if you were really someone rich in town. Just as buying a new car every year is a sign of wealth and prestige rather than keep to drive a nice dependable old vintage automobile. But small minds always impose their brand of haughty status symbols on everyone else.

Symbols of wealth meant everything if one were to be respectable. I was lucky to have my father-in-law's fine country home to call as my address. That homeplace had the best entertainment of all, even better than in Commerce town, since violin playing was constant at the homeplace called Winniford Way. My father-in-law lived near his two brothers; in fact, his eldest brother Norvell Sherwin Winniford married a widow Minnie Tarrant Clayton who had a whole slew of relatives from Tarrant County just west of Dallas. Well, Minnie prided herself on being an honest good woman with Christian principles so when she told a white lie or big-windy as we homefolks would say, then, Minnie's neck veins would bulge out and constrict into a dead-give-away for sure. We never let on since that clue was proof positive of her mendacity to follow and we thusly knew when she lied definitely. But good ole Minnie was a dear; she had a daughter Effie Clayton Bishop who met tragedy more than once. Effie's husband died just when the Great Depression began plus she lost the old Kentucky home and had to move into the house when her mother wed Norve Winniford here on the family land road called Winniford Loop. Poor Effie was stricken by so many plaques at the same time that she fell into bed permanently with not enough strength to get out for years. But one cool day, the flu of the cookstove caught fire and the first person out of the house was Effie or Miss Effie as we called the poor ole soul who was bedfast for years. She ran like a scared rabbit more than once but her legs really were weak and had to have therapy to walk all time later. Once she began to walk again, she went to town and walked everywhere; couldn't see enough, to get a good gander at all the old familiar sights in town, I guess. But then the daughters Murray Katherine and Mata Jewel had to wait on their mother Effie and

help their grandmother Minnie Winniford too. Those pretty red haired gals married into the best families around with their good personalities and church ways, plus kinship to the Captain Tarrant who had been an original settler of the county and they now well-connected to the Winniford kin. But Norve soon died after we got back home from the Big Thicket terrain. He died from ailments caused when he got hit by a car when he crossed the busy Highway 67 that cut slap dab through the middle of Cumby town; he never got used to having look both ways before crossing a street as he grew up in the days of horses that saw folks to step around them. And then the old house that had been built of lumber bought with the legacy funds to his first wife and mother of his children, just suddenly burned plumb down to the ground; the fire happened when widow Minnie Winniford was visiting her son in Kentucky; it just mysteriously burned as the will of God wanted it to do or so the numerous cousins expounded with glee. That was a good Christian act for sure and the arsonists were not even members of "the can't fall from grace" church so they had to pray a lot to get back into God's good graces after that evil act. I ain't got no axe to grind but the truth is a most entertaining fact about human nature doing evil acts while also never missing church and acting the great Christian who will stoop to any lengths in the name of God. Fire is a favorite cleansing tool to be used by the cowardly Christians (they don't have the guts to tell you to your face so they sneak around in the name of God, saying that the Lord meeted out justice since all things happen for the good in the long run). Deliver me from God's chosen few for sure. God has really been used and abused by the good people of this Christian nation; God's voice never gets heard above the uproar of all the church going folks who are so quick to tell you what the allmighty has told them to do! Too much yacking to hear God talk. Talk is just all hearsay anyway. Religion or ours is the chosen-few, for we are the surviving Angles and Saxons of the whole cultural heritage that keep alive as being selfish enough to say that "God is an Englishman." I was still glad to be back in God's country, here at Commerce town amid all my jealous kin and then among all the bickering relatives of my wife's tribe. Cumby is some place; Cumby is the largest town in the world by that name as I hear tell. Nearly everybody was glad to see us back among the living at the homeplace, to help with the chores.

My sister-in-law Miss Lynna Winniford was the gladest to see us all come back home; she was tired of having to leave her fine home at Christmas time in order to deliver my children their Santa Claus Christmas gifts. Miss Lynna bought and paid for everything Santa was supposed to bring: bowl full of candy berries, carmel popcorn balls, fresh fruit in the stockings, toys and gifts wrapped in fancy boxes plus the turkey with its trimmings. And then she got to hug my kids for days since they missed each other more than words could ever say or all the gifts money could buy (seems that family ties for blue-bloods goes deeper than a passing hello or simple good-to-see-you salutation). Miss Lynna really was our Santa Claus savior. We ate so much we got just too fat for words.

Miss Lynna and her sister Lucille usually always drove down to Channelview and Hardin before that on the edge of the Big Thicket forestlands to surprise us and to bring in season food stuff from the homeplace such as fresh salted pork at hog butchering time; to this day, I no longer can eat swine liver because we got sick from eating too much when we had nearly starved to death during the great depression; that's how hungry we were in that Great Depression and was too proud to admit that I could barely feed my family; pride is worse than poverty which is bad enough. We always knew when the Winniford girls were coming; the distant car horn of her big yellow Buick went "Beep-Beep" with 3 long and a short blast (a calling card of sorts). My little boy Bobby always came a-running to that signal where ever we living saying "Who goes Beep-Beep on Bobby?" He knew the seasonal joyous answer long before hand.

Back then was when we needed to win the Irish Sweepstakes. But the luck of the Irish was fast upon us anyway or nohow since we stayed poor just like the starving Irish back in Ireland. Well, the front yard at the homeplace still had the big old yellow Buick sitting in the carriage house; that Buick had been the pride and joy of all; Miss Lynna drove the wheels so to speak off that automobile; her long hair flew back into the wind when she whizzed by. She was the girl in the big yellor

Buick as the 1920's popular song said. I mention this again because that old car is just sitting rusting to pieces as a reminder of all the good times as well as the near catastrophe of burning the whole place down if fire had spread to all 22 outside building of Winniford Way homeplace. Miss Lynna still wore her hair long after the senged hairs grew out and the string of pearls she had on that day have a brown burnt look to this day and the velvet hat fashioned after the Kaiser Bill's war helmets has small holes in it and her pretty dress with a fringe banner is full of brown holes that almost look oddly pretty for casual wear; she is flucey in just about anything she wears. The rusting car is just a constant reminder of that day but junk iron is getting to be valuable to sell to Japan so we are all picking up old iron to haul into town when we get a truck load but the old Buick is its own load. Tis a shame not to restore it like car bufs do lately in the 1970's.

My father-in-law really was nearly scared to death when the fire broke out. But he is still grieved nearly to death in late 1939 at the demise of his brother Norvell Sherwin Winniford. That grief sapped his strength and he himself soon became bedfast but at doctor's orders. Robert Winniford had a heart ailment and had worked himself to death nearly, worn out like a rusty piece of farm machinery (he once stood in his wagon and used an iron maul to drive fence posts deep into the ground all around his farm so that kind of rigorous work finally took its toll as the good doctor so often said). And now adeserved rest in bed was due him. For the next four years till 18 October 1943, the poor man who was an outdoors fiend had to stay bedfast and languish his lot in life and just got weaker and never left his sickbed or death-bed as the family often called it. Becoming inactive gave him a death sentence for sure. Doctors don't know everything like they enjoy claiming when expounding on life threatening illnesses. Doctors don't have to live with the consequences of their mistakes of diagnosis like the patient does and the whole family suffers while the doctor charges his big fee. That's why I go to doctors who themselves have the same kind of ailments that I have; I don't want a total heartless doctor without some sympathy on his mind. Thus, my father-in-law so put to bed dressed in his pajamas to meet death head-on for years. At first, kinfolks came to visit but soon very few bothered even to drop by when passing the driveway on their rounds to do some other mischief; he was just taking too long to die (all the good people he helped in their time of need did not give him the time of day or a simply brief howdy). The good Christians just ignored the sick old man after a year since they couldn't fall from grace and had nothing to worry about doing a sin of omission like us other Christians could lose our goody entrance into heaven's gate (no wonder the crooks attend that church and always tell you they are members there when serving in government elected jobs while stealing taxpayers blind; they are the true big redneck majority who invented a scoundrel's religion for sure). I saw all these religionists in action myself so no hearsay. Those folks were better than God so they treated dear old Uncle Bob as most old timers called my father-in-law just any old way but what goes around comes around; they will die along the same kind of treatment they dealt out to him. That is the way good acting folks treat hard-working people who no longer can be used. God has a lot of justice to deal out.

But some relatives never neglected the old dying man; Marvin Winniford always visited when he could. He lived in West Texas and bought lots of land and farmed on a big scale like his Uncle Bob had taught him to work the land. All the 9 brothers and sisters who visited Marvin always returned to brag about how rich he was and that the desert land was rich when watered by the deep wells that Marvin Winniford had drilled. And to hear tell, the desert around Slaton was heaven on earth; everyone should live there (even though Sally Henderson had visited her brother just before a sand storm blew in at midnight and the stifling sand filled the house so she got up and in the middle of the night drove out of there in her new Packard automobile saying that she was too clean to endure that filth). Well, some of the cousins returned to tell my father-in-law about the wonderful visit and then they mentioned that a West Texas farmer had died recently so my sick father-in-law barely raised up on his elbow and declared: "Well, I was about to sell this old homestead here and move out there to cure what ails me since that is supposed to be heaven on earth like all of you always say." But since folks can die out there afterall,

then I will just stay here and die. I am surprised that anyone can die out there in that land of God's milk and honey to hear you tell it all. The room was silent for a long time.

Silence was golden to what usually followed around the old Winniford homeplace. Elsie, my niece, who had wed my sweetheart wife Miss Ella's brother Everett, could not let her pettie coat touch her until she moved to West Texas too. Also, that would get Everett away from the homeplace for the first time in his life and just when he was needed the most to run the place with Uncle Bob getting bedfast. But the move to Ararillo was not enough of a power trip for the scheming Miss Elsie, yet she had to chance his vocation from farmer to railroad engineer for the Santa Fee Railroad as she called the Santa Fe. They lived in an apartment no less to her specification after knowing the wide open spaces in a big fine old house; they just lived like white trash to our way of thinking for the standards of the landed gentry to work-hard and have earned elegance.

But Miss Elsie got chased out of town by her own designs in late 1939 when the town square violin dance erupted in half a dozen divorces when folks snugged up to each other's belly's to slow-dance to Sam Winniford's music; preachers blamed the violin and the fiddler rather than the weak morals of their parishioners; that was done to get back in a snide way to the first-family Winnifords who were considered rich and thus envied as well as the Taylors who owned businesses also. Envy is a mean master of some folk's mentality and underhanded ways to get even with others for having worked hard themselves. But Reverend Doctor Charles Taliaferreo Alexander came to the family cousin's rescue; he was a big Baptist preacher so the accusers recoiled and had to hold their tongues plus Sam Winniford was also a big Baptist. But Elsie was a member of the first Christian Church that had little clout and then most of the Taylors were Presbyterian so their minority religions did not merit deep respect in town so the gossips had a hayday malingering Elsie. That also prompted her to want to move far away from back-biting Commerce where she had grown up. Folks still smiled to Elsie's face but had a field-day talking evil behind her back when she walked hardly far enough away to overhear. That's the way big acting Christians put on airs. Amarillo already had kin living out there.

Another relative, Gladys Butler Armstrong Cash with her husband Homer were there so a good job lead was gotten by Homer for Everett who needed work. Everett had already gotten meager railroad experience at Shiloh Springs in Arkansas when he visited his Uncle Luther Landtroop there and worked briefly on the railroad nearby. Homer even let E.D. stay at his house. Homer bought himself a section of land near Channing, about 50 miles northwest of Amarillo and he never had to lay out a cent of his money either; the moment he signed the papers an oil company leased the acreage and that lease paid the land off. Everett could have done the same for land there and elsewhere around Amarillo but bossy Elsie hated the farm life and was herself at long last getting away from that lifestyle. She got her way. She had wiles to use that only a woman can know best how to control a man. But I would have thought that E.D. Winniford would have gotten in on a good deal so cheap that would eventually make him a multi-millionaire. But Elsie did not see things that way. And Elsie did not raise her only child either as a baby or school aged girl; such domestic duties did not fit into the fancy plans Elsie had; little Ida Margaret was reared mostly by her grandmother Ida Salmon Taylor, whom she called Big Momma since my girl Lynna Estelle called Aunt Mag Winniford Minnie-maw and then by boy called her Mamma-maw. Ida Margaret even went to school in Commerce where only good teachers existed rather than the hick-town or country schools of Cumby area where hayseed farmers attended. Little Ida Margaret visited on weekends sometimes at the old homeplace like an exalted guest. Now, what would you expect from that child???? Miss Elsie lauded it over the whole family like some royal princess with an invading army when she did return home from Amarillo and also had done same when bringing little Ida Margaret from school to the farm (both of Bob Winniford's daughter-in-laws acted they were the Queen of Sheba or Queen of England when it was the Winnifords truly descended from the royalty of England and Scotland; I would call Miss Elsie white trash but then she is kin to me so why demean myself and my blood-kin. Miss Elsie even once said that those Winniford girls Lynna and Lucille with their

highstepping ways will not be so high and mighty when their daddy dies. And that statement was overheard when Miss Elsie said it at the mailbox and her words echoed down the lane into the house like an oracle tube. Hearing her prophecy had a telling effect on the dying old man, so he called the county land clerk out to his house and then he signed the deeds over to his three daughters jointly because a legal will could be broken by some shifty daughter-in-law like her or else kept from being probated for years. And my weak old father-in-law could not remember how to spell his own signed name; he had to be coaxed and coached along with each letter in the long surname signation on the deeds. This fact would have been grounds for legalities to oust the unmarried daughters after he did die but all the would-be cheaters are now dead so only God knows their mendacity and has rewarded them accordingly, surely. My little boy Bobby witnessed the signing and heard all the pitiful coaxing but he kept his mouth shut, for he knew which side his bread was buttered on just from observing the kin in action around the death bed antics.

Death is a mighty good thing; the good old earth can get a new set of cheaters every few dozen years rather than have the same old liars all the time for eternity running things. Would seem like half of forever if folks from five centuries ago were still alive and in charge of government looting. At least the names change if nothing else does in politics and big business or also small business. I like going to funerals, just to see if the devil can really die in that old so-and-so as my old daddy often enough said over the years. Death is indeed a good thing.

Death delivers the chronic ill from pain and gets rid of the SOB's once in a while. Me too. All the can't-fall-from-grace Christians will learn that justice still comes to those who steal in the name of goodness. Well Gladys Butler Cash almost died from TB; all her folks came from Florence, Alabama to escape the disease in 1889 but the germ lies dormant in the bones (folks used to get the ailment from wood burning stoves because of the invisible gases that infected the lungs and then the disease spread through the air into the ribs and showed-up in the genes later). Gladys had to go to a sanatorium for the cure and even had a rib removed to save her life for the next 50 years so she was lucky as some said but that was God's punishment according to the religionists, who disliked the family because of past disagreements. God did that to her just to punish her father or so the local wags liked to say; more words got put into God's mouth by the good people of the town just for spite. Now, you can see why I just had to hang out in Commerce town; to learn what God said for sure or exacted from the folks was an entertainment that money could not buy. No mortal could resist this opportunity to go hear what God said back then about folks as only the gossipers oddly knew (anyway, we baked the letters that Gladys wrote us from the sanatorium in the oven because we feared getting germs inadvertently since God did not ever speak directly to us and tell us not to heat the letters to kill the disease we had to do things for ourselves since we had only the holy Bible to rely on for the source of God's words. Guess the Devil made the other kin rationalize what God said ugly about Gladys.

Mamie Winniford Robertson talked a lot about everyone; she just passed the word around so thusly wasn't a gossip according to her reationalizing. Mamie could only have one friend at a time to pick your brain for details to relate so to speak; she was nice as pie and could eat you up when you were her favorite person of the week. But if and when you got on her black list, so help you God, there was no letting up till she had done her do on you for sure. To give an example, Mamie interpreted actions according to her ill will or not, such as if you stumbled into a room where Miss Mamie sat, then Mamie said you dragged your feet to keep from speaking to her since she hated your guts at that time. Yet if you were friends of the moment to her, then you were rushing to see her so fast that you were walking all over yourself just to see her lovely self. Now, that is some fancy foot work to make events into what you want them to be. But that is just life around the good Christian acting folks who talk to God directly when everyone else only gets the hearsay of the Lord passed about as gospel. The Devil must be having a good time with all the sugar coated goodness that get passed off as gospel.

Sugar coated sweet sounding words full of devious intent kept us all on our toes all the time around Mamie and her ilk. Speaking the truth around her has its drawbacks because devious folks can use your own words against you in the name of God.

Just like when a damn-yankee drove into town and got out of his Michigan tagged car and then loudly exclaimed as if all were deaf: "When did this hick town die? It is so dull and quiet here, way behind the times." Mamie responded acidly, "You are the first buzzard to be seen circling the carcass so it hasn't been observed dead and dull for long till you got here with your smelly tongue." She could put you in your place faster than you could say Jack Robinson, her name being Mamie Robertson and all. Gee-willikers, I was too busy minding my own business to make up such a tale or even pass along the gossip of the town than to make a yutz of myself.

My Uncle William Taylor who owned a mercantile-livery stable from the founding days of early Commerce had died in 1934 but not from boredom but from old age like all of us Taylors. Uncle Bill helped get the college to move to Commerce so he was all for education that could bring in money enterprises and his daughter Mary married Homer Winn from Winnsboro. Homer had a weird eyeball from having had pink-eye disease back some time ago but he joked a lot and was friendly; he moved his business to Greenville and on to Dallas later. The Depression was about to eat us all alive; the Taylor fortunes and influence were on the wane but the college was still located on old Taylor owned land donated for that purpose as an enticement for its establishment in the first place. Old Nimrod Taylor had to take care of himself now and he had his share of stashed gold coins that were suddenly legally declared unlawful to hold or have more than 10 on the premises so his hundreds of coins in gold legacy made him another fugitive or law-breaker but then what can you expect from the Federal Government. Cousin Terza Sullivan moved with him to Greenville to be his housekeeper and all was very incognito just like in the olden days when that shirt-tail sheriff from Winnsboro was after young Nimrod. Well, my brother Guy was a tailor by trade and worked in a pressing shop for hats before moving to Lubbock for the prosperity there amid all his Great Depression contacts; he had a lung disease and went to the high cap rock mild climate for that ailment which most Taylors have an inherited lung disease that smoking helps develop into emphysema. A lot of Commerce folks had moved to Lubbock along with Tom Holley's son left Holley Flat to live in dusty Lubbock with his young family in the 1920's though. All of them visited back and forth as friends do to their branchwater kinfolk since intermarrying happened all the time with us old homefolks.

Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander continued to visit from his fancy church on Grande Avenue in Dallas ever chance he could get; his son Paul wed Mary Lou Whitley whose father was president of East Texas Normal College. Normal meant a teachers school back in those good old days. But Paul and Mary Lou had a quarrel so the get-togethers with them was icy cold enough to make Hell freeze over for sure.

All the Alexander kin showed up at Winniford Way or Ubrane homeplace for the annual Easter Egg hunts or Egg Rolls that now included candy eggs or store bought stuff; seems that the sugar ants spend all their time at the picnics gathering the sweets too. But no more family engagements seemed to result from these outdoor affairs. Folks were too busy driving their cars real fast to stop for long at Easter Egg hunts or egg lawn parties or to play crockque. Simple joys seem to be out of style now. The world is changing and not for the better either. But the more things change, the more they stay the same in the long run so I may live to see what goes around then comes back around.

Most distant relatives came for all the free food and to keep in touch with all the family gossip. Earl Males came early and stayed late with his wife and 2 children; his mother was Ivey Alexander who was a sister to the good Reverend Doctor Charles T. Earl Males was the first relative to have the echo-lane-oracle tube to work against him when he said that all the relatives would inherit land when great-aunt Rebeccah Alexander died without a legal will as she would do since thinking that legal documents bring on a fast death even at her age of 89. He talked himself out of a fortune by saying outloud what he planned to do because old Great Aunt Rebeccah herself heard his schemes as the whispers echoed down the lane into the old house; she then went to town and deeded her land to my father-in-law who worked the acreage himself and gave her the profits in cash each autumn. Schemes are such a pertinent part of good Christian folks even against the relatives.

Miss Ella and I decided to move our family from all the fuss by going to Sherman

to work on the extra board there since railroading activity was booming, being just above Dallas where prosperity seemed unlimited in relation to the poverty of all the small towns in East Texas. But sight unseen always makes the idea of prosperity seem better than it is or the land of milk and honey with streets laid with gold is a myth always but nice to think about when you are preparing to move there. I had to follow the jobs since prosperity would not just come to me, nothing works out like that but all the fine Church ladies in town stated that I was too evil and wicked for God to reward me with jobs coming into my lap as the pious liked to remind me so they really perverted God's face toward anyone not sitting on their pew. I never went back to that mean-spirited Church or ever spoke first to those godly ladies since they were too smug and hateful to acknowledge as human beings anymore. They would make a person believe in aethism for sure. Sherman was no better than home folks said it would be; that made the church ladies happy to hear. Miss Ella and I rented the Peveto house there; their son went to Dallas to set-up an auto shop and then his son decades later went to Houston to establish an auto business. I got accused of stealing food at a store in Sherman but was never convicted, just old quarrels got out of hand (the long arm of the law is always connected to favors of some power structure businessmen that provides the money bags that grease the wheels of justice). I got over that insult and then moved to Texarkana to get a job on the extra board since the Red River Army Ammunition Depot was going great guns. We soon lived at Ted Windills place; he and his 3 brothers owned a mule barn where we visited a lot to enjoy the animals like being back on the farm; the Windill brothers all resided on Texas Avenue, we at 512. They all had huge houses with several apartments to rent out; our next door upstairs neighbor was Otto Neal and her mother. Otto's brother Claude was always out of town because he had gotten into the bad crowd with the local mafia and dope was planted in a car so he was a patsy for the guilty ones who posed as the cream of society in Texarkana. We heard this tale numerous times from the lips of Otto Neal and her dear old mother along with the society version from Mrs. Ted Windill. The good people in Texarkana let the mafia thrive by not admitting to all the evil, for when any dirt is uncovered the good folks yell to get out of their nice town and quit saying bad things (tis easier to attack the messenger than to do anything about the real evil). Love it or leave it is their mealy mouthed cry by every ole lout in town. So the slobs really have a bird nest on the ground, all in the name of goodness not to demean their good town that one must say only good things or nothing at all so no discussion gets done to correct the evil (this is the clever tactic of the prospering thieves who surely do attend the church that one cannot fall from grace; that is all a clever redneck device). But I needed a job too much to resist or to try to improve the town of Texarkana. We were treated like white trash by all the moss backs who smile to your face but say the meanest things to your backside. Jealousy is a powerful tool in town so my little girl with her straight A's in class was black-balled from all the soroties in the high school on Texas side of Texarkana. They don't want competition so they get a few to play hookey and lead the other astray; a bad reputation results and small towns do not ever let you live down any bad thing you ever did plus they hold it against you for ever more. No never mind that you are no worse than the children of the rich and influential; not getting caught is the only thing that counts. So here us is in sin city. My little girl learned all this mischief the hard way for sure.

I was soon working long hours but made time to remain a good fisherman; I was still the best anglier in the world, going now to the nearby pools or old rivers in the Arklatex area of Texarkana environs. But I still enjoyed returning to Commerce and fishing in the roundhouse pool on branch water kinsman Joe Mangrum's land; he wed my cousin Salley Sullivan and got a housefull of our relatives as well. Salley's sister Terza lived with them; they had never been separated a day in their lives. Those two old maid sisters drew straws to decide who had to marry that confirmed bachelor so they could have a roof over their heads during the Great Depression; that was the only reason they wed him so to speak. Ladies of quality did not live on the premises owned by an unmarried man in those moral days, no kind of indecent immorality was allowed to exist for long in town even as a possible gossip topic. Since my folks and all kin could gossip so well, we thus knew how to avoid the real bad gossipers by keeping our noses clean and consequently out of trouble.

Anyway, Joe Mangum was family of sorts for sure, and I got along with him so I was allowed to fish free of charge there. And man did I ever need the free eats. I was still a good fisherman, always going straight to the secret best places where the fish just couldn't wait to get caught by me, jumping like jacks out of the water onto my baited hook. Now, that's how much the fish liked my good looks.

I always took the wiggling fish home alive to throw into the frying pan, fresh as a daisy to eat. My skills were certainly appreciated at the breakfast table. But my little boy ate the most and did not seem to grow any; he had tonsillitis troubles and bad adnois along with inner-ear infections when we returned from semi-tropical South Texas to cold East Texas snowy winter climate. Cold weather is more suffering of a hell than the hottest fires of hades could ever be. Cold weather pert near killed him for the next 15 years. But Little Bobby ate fish till he got sick of it and after getting grown will not eat any fish because of the mercury pollution in rivers and lakes (I didn't raise no fool). Yet the fish that I caught would fill a big-bad belly for sure and my dear wife of a sweetheart Miss Ella cooked them up with a big fish fry for all the neighbors to share; she was good and sweet like that to do things as "We have a marriage of convenience, mainly mine, as I always laughed when describing my wife's hard work to please me. Everybody and their dogs were always there to eat my fish, fresh from the local Commerce round-house pool.

Yep, I was always glad to return to hometown Commerce. I always walked the brick streets to see the old familiar places and old timers after our years of expatriat exile from Commerce. And I wanted to get the latest poop, as the Hollywood movie star columnist would say about important things.

Oliver Brothers pharmacy on west side of the square and even Cranfords drug store on north side which is longest block in America or so reputed (Mrs. Cranford's grand mother is kin to the Winnifords). I even said howdy to barber Dewey Chapman at his shop where everybody's errand boy Dick Harrington hung out (his mental deficiencies were hardly noticed after seeing his zeal to do a good job or so Harrington proved his mettle to all). Dewey though got pretty tipsey every day in this Commerce town that was dry as a bone on the Sahara Desert (but good errand boys could fina a local bootlegger at the Chief of Police's office). Another favorite haunt of mine was Lily ice cream factiory that was still big as ever selling in all the little East Texas towns for a 120 miles radius, even to Texarkana. Jim Clark men's wear was a good sight to behold along with Drake Brothers furniture store. Even Knight-Chaney Victorian marble-top furnishings was an exclusive place to take a gander and just see again, even though young Knight Chaney himself was a philander in old Nigger Holler and used his grandfather Tom Knight's fortune all up. I was happy as a clan to be back home in God's County, happy as if I had good sense.

My favorite barber shop was Uncle Dick Hunter on the West side of the square next to O'Neal's Hardware store. The shoeshine man was my boyhood chum Nigger Duggan, son of my mother's Nigger Mamie Duggan. Her son Alonza Duggan was my playmate and good friend. Boy Duggan sang and spit shined boots and fancy slippers fast as you could be please (Boy Duggan usta throw rocks and coal chunks on my head if I crossed too onto the wrong side of the railroad tracks near the Nigger Holler, now called the Holler because Black folks holler and sing a lot when just sitting or doing regular household chores. I returned the favor if Boy Duggan got on my side of the turf; we gave as good as we got and laughed about it later. And we learned to love each other through mutual earned respect.

Verbal battles were ended with the use of a Piss Ellum Club waved to stop the really heated arguments; arguments raged over the least infraction during a long rainy day when cooped up too long. This custom of a fancy club made from an Elm tree was used to settle discord at the old homeplace named Winniford Way. Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander gave my son a fancy Mexican baseball bat orreally a pinata stick that he so used (the pinata stick was full of fancy carving and colored figures inscribed all around it like an Aztex emblem so breaking the pinata with fruit inside with a fancy stick like that must have a real celebration). But here in deep East Texas we made our own traditions done with flare. This fancy bat was kept behind the dining room door and we got to discussing and cussing on a subject at the dinner table all ranting at the table for hours so the Piss Ellum club was picked up to wave in the air and settle matters right then and there.

I was still glad to be back home again, even though I soon got tired of all the same old rigamoroll. I soon got back in the groove living the good life according to the social graces or mores of East Texas small town culture. Saturday night was an institution of an event, to take a bath and then get all spruced-up and walk the square to see who else was out on the town. Getting a parking space in front of a store (any store) was coveted like gold in cold weather. Even the train station was a popular place when a passenger train arrived, just to see who was coming and going for a change. All the low-down gossip was gleaned during these times.

Gee whiz what was a guy to do but listen to all the dirty stuff told about all the folks in town and I was afraid to leave the enclave for then they would start in on me like a cow-on-a-whiz. Geeze only more dirt about the rich would do. I got tired of it all but had to stay to protect my own reputation. I had a scared look or the cat that ate the mouse look, so I keep staying and hanging around. I learned that the white man Lem Knight was father of high yellow negro children; the negro Aunt Hattie Purta or Essie Dee always said "My son Jim Knight is the son of the finest white man in Commerce." That put a quietesce to some of the bad mouthing talk when she interjected that commentary about life in Commerce town; that was more than we jawboners deserved to hear in polite society gathering like on Saturday night. No one here but us chickens, just about summed up that gathering.

The preachers never gave sermons on such morality or a lack of it but then most of them were busy trying to build a finer edifice so they protected their interest with the wealthy Knight family. You don't go by what preachers say ever; they will lead you to the collection plate for sure. The good book of the BIBLE is the only source of God's word on earth. No one alive has God's ear as the chosen few like the fancy Dan preachers claim, lying through their teeth. That's enough to make an atheist of you definitely. My dear old daddy learned that the hard way when he guided preachers to the Oklahoma Land Rush so they could steal land from the Indians ahead of the specified date. My father always said he knew God's way as well as any preacher man in town did. Daddy is now retired here in Commerce and is learning things at the college library that he once never thought was worth while to read about. His contemporary friends complain about retirement being a bore, their saying: "I am retired with nothing to do and all the time in the world to do it." That is the will of allah, be done or be gone, like I say about such a waste of time when all they have to do is put on their thinking cap to figure out something to use their time constructively. They could go to dances if their religion permitted it. I know my dad danced a jig with the ladies; he was not through with her (his partner) by a long shot and they danced so much the floor fell out from under them; now I would not kid a kiddier like you about that sort of good times and good use of idle time. A really good dance partner was Vallie McElvey whose husband was a cripple and they were the telephone operators at the Cumby phone company which the local citizens owned with stock shares; Vallie was hungry for some sort of vigorous physical activity for her recreation let me tell you. She was a dancing fool. The motto for the dancing fools was to do something even if it was wrong. She was a real spit fire though if you insulted her virtue that she was triffling on her sick husband still at home; she was just out on the town painting it red for a change of pace. These old time dances were free since folks brought their violin or banjo or French-harp not to be confused with a French Horn bass instrument because most folks call it an harmonica; we had occasionally an accordian for a polka or cajun music. But mostly the Jews harp was used to tune the voice for the acapella singing; we had enough free entertainment to last a life time or so we thought. We had cheap fun and thought we could bring the moon down low enough to buy it for our inexpensive good times during these youthful days. We did not spend money simply because we did not have any to spend. Thus, we fit in with my Uncle Scotty avaricious ways with our niggardly lifestyle. All this public fun was done to forget our household woes.

But the worst misfortune or family woe that hit that little boy of mine was his curiosity that could kill a cat and nearly immortalized him for sure at the same time. That son of mine played too near the front yard center flower bed at Winniford Way homeplace; all the old timey places had a huge cactus bed with a buffalo skull and bones decorated in the center on large rocks that called attention to this beautification to look like pioneer days on a trail drive. Well, my little boy

toppled over into that cactus bed and he looked like a porcupine for sure. His howling and screeches called our attention to his plight quick enough; we picked small spikes out of his ornery hide for weeks and then some. He sure shied far from that center piece of a flower bed after that experience. That prickley pear of a cactus bed had to be replaced so we turned the goats onto it by putting a fence around it; goats will eat anything that you don't want them to devour such as clothes on the line or even good metal buckets with the smell of food still inside them or any tin can that is smeally. But not a bite of that cactus ever got even a nibble from the cantankerous goats. We had to finally burn the cactus bed; we threw the hot coals from the wood burning stoves there for years before the growth even began to recede certainly keeping water off it would not kill the nuisance. We had to dig it out by the roots when the top wilted back and then the splinters of a spine would penetrate the thickest gloves. Urine best thwarted the growth, emptied chamber pots on it and then the privy smell nearly killed us. Hades itself must have a boundary fence of cactus beds to keep all the hellions deep inside, secure to their banishment.

We planted a border of the last rows of summer commonly called red canna flowers around the smelly cactus bed that was so dangerous. But what finally completely killed down the cactus bed best of all was urine: human. Now, that is the nice socially polite word for what we did to that prickley pear bed. When all the family assembled for the get-to-gethers, I put my imagination to work on overtime for feeding that cactus some kind of poison like it meeted out to us humans. Well, when the lazy afternoons took over from the heavy noon meal, I told all the men to go take a leak at the cactus bed; we had contests to see who could piss the farthest into the root system. Took nearly 10 years to eradicate, but we finally killed that ornery cuss down to size enough to start digging the root cause out. The dense cactus growth fell down limp like the walls of Jerico in the Bible. Such drollery of lazy afternoons contests after a big noon meal really paid off. All us big daddies will do anything to help a little kid who has been hurt so all the fathers did their do really well to eradicate the menace of the thorns of contention.

My little boy had nightmare dreams about that old cactus bed. But most of all he had dreams about being born. He claimed that he could remember being birthed. Well, my little boy claimed that he began existence as a pair of eyes like on a painted canvas by an oil painter. The art work gradually extended his whole being; he could feel the strokes making his legs, his arms and his whole body finally took form; the head and consciousness he said were always there or at least first formed. And then, he would run off the canvass into the moving terrain of the landscape. Sometimes, he would return into the painting before awaking. So, my little boy was alive before he was an infant born or a baby in our household or so goes the tales of his dreams since this recurrent dreams is dreamed in chapters that he can take up at will by just thinking about the last dream before going to sleep; he can read his dreams like a textbook with future chapters being added each new time.

Another dream that was recurrent always viewed the tombstone under giant pecan tree near the old homeplace in the West pasture. All the numbers were the same so until reaching age 11, he assumed that he would die young but then age 111 seems uncanny to live so long (but now folks live to be 101 on TV shows about famous folk and then the last surviving Civil War veteran was age 115 at Houston during the 1950's. All the kinfolk said that his being sick a lot made him want to die but that dream was not of death but of living; it was reassurance by God that he would live in spite of all the bad health. Kin do not want any relative to have a better chance of hope than they have so they deniegrate all that the cousins have happening to them. And the preachers of junk religion churches want to scare the hell out of you by saying that the Devil made you dream such things to be that way or to do bad things is caused by the devil so you will continue to attend only their sanctified halls and donate the tithe in fear of eternal damnation otherwise. But I had rather give my money to the Lord directly when I see a hungry soul on the street or see someone in rags to buy them something better to wear as a direct means of help, for "as ye do this for the least then ye do this for me." Why pay raving preachers who always have an extra job anyway selling insurance or teaching school when the truly poor are obvious to those with eyes to see. Odd that preachers sell insurance when God should protect you, not a man-made institution that requires dollars.

Religion was about the only subject most folks knew enough to talk about. And then only could repeat what their preacher had expounded upon for an hour. Glad that Charles T. Alexander could converse on other topics since he knew that all of us Church of Christ folks knew the Bible for ourselves and did not depend upon the reading from a preacher to tell us the written word. Well, we knew the politics of the day and some of the social habits of world leaders and movie stars. Movies are the extent of intellectual capacity for most of the average folks. Why, folks take seriously the antics of the silver screen stars. Clark Gable is a foul mouthed old buzzard and he had a brain, I would have thought him to death for sure. I visited vulgar Hollywood once; I spent a week there one night as the scaredy cats would say. Clark Gable reputes to talk as foul as most railroaders. I have gotten back with railroaders and their vicious talk of shit-fire and save matches way of saying most things; they will argue even when obviously wrong which is called butt-head momentum as most goofballs do. They don't need to be so violent with their tongue as my co-worker Charlie Bell would say; he nailed his bedposts to the floor when his wife moved the furniture around after he went to work and he returned late at night to get in bed in the dark but fell on the floor where the bed usta to be; Charlie cursed a blue-streak but well, then, he was just trying to talk me to death concerning all his anxiety. The tail of life was wagging Charlie to death back then. And too Charlie Bell did not like the name of Bobby for my little boy because says he the name Bobbie is a double entendre for policeman as a "Bobbie" in England. Imagining the two as the same really made me wonder about his mental faculties since he was a boozier sometimes and must be getting wet-brain syndrome for sure.

I should not cast the first stone about drinkers but can't resist the chance. If my long tongue were tied in the middle, I could talk much faster and tell twice the tales that just might enable me to get all my stories told before I die of old age. But then I just talk the way I normally do and for the fun of it all at that. I should read more but weak eyesight is my excuse, poor as it be. A pal of mine always placed a twenty dollar bill in the classic books to encourage his children at least to open them and take a gander. But that was big money during the depression. But he made them take a quiz on the contents before being allowed to keep the big twenty dollar bill. His children were indeed smart and seemed to have plenty of spending money. All his little girlieques as he called his 7 daughters had plenty of smarts to spare or to throw around to impress others.

Impressing others seemed easy when one had a few spare dollars to spend back then in the good old days of poverty. The Winniford homeplace finally got painted by all the kinfolks helping out; it took a while to slap the paint on but it looked like prosperity had returned for sure, again. No one wasted a drop of paint on the ground; cost too much to splatter droplets to waste; folks once knew how to conserve and use everything and that also made the whole countryside look neat and clean rather than be a junk yard of a sore eye like now. America has become ugly and filthy because that is the way the narrow-minded or single-tracked folks are today with the agenda to be themselves and free as a breeze to do their own thing; their attitudes show in their actions. Folks had rather mess up the terrain than throw trash in a garbage can, such mindless resentment of decency amazes me to this day.

Well, I sold scrap iron metal and made a living until I got a steady job on the extra board again in Texarkana. That helped keep the landscape clean and put food on the table as well. I worked my backside off being a responsible citizen, not because I was such a good Christian but because I did not want the wife and children to starve to death. That at least was my excuse at the time till this day.

Robert Ellis visited again every autumn as usual; he was so rich he doesn't know how much he is worth as the saying goes. He had money to burn but he never did and it was for sure going out of style with him who never spent a dime foolishly. He wore the same old overalls with a black coat over it when going to church or traveling on the bus. That man was so Scotch that he had dust coming out of his wallet on the rare occasions he opened it up to spend something.

But Cousin Robert at Brownsville in the Texas fruit Valley as we called him worked like a Trojan around the homeplace, doing whatever looked like it needed to be done. He also taught Bible Study at church in Cumby; he refused to go to Sunday School since that was a new invention started the year year he was born in the last

century; also he used a Bible book with no verse and chapter numbering since the original Bible had only paragraphs marked off so he did not learn quotations out of context since no John 3:16 existed until modern man perverted the biblical pages; Cousin Robert Ellis was a stickler for exactitude and he would say "I stand Corrected" when a word was mispronounced or mistakenly interpreted. But Cousin Robert was seldom wrong about anything he said since he was a man of a few words, certainly none idle or falsely accusing others; he was the arch conservative of all time. He ask questions a lot but seldom gave answers unless someone was giving wrong information. We worked good together all those years he visited the farm when I was there. He was an honest, fair and just person. But he was crabby and ill as a hornet when his silence was interrupted because he liked himself just the way he was too much to indulge in idle chit chat with an ignorant fool. He suffered fools lightly for sure. He was a rich man so he could afford to be his own man and still have community respect since God had rewarded him for being good or so the social word was out on him. Folks overlook harshness of the wealthy citizens but despise when poor souls are crabby so Cousin Robert was rich enough to be respected by all the morally corrupt souls in the family and local community; respect goes to the rich.

Cousin Robert was a hard worker and preferred to be busy most of the time; he always helped round up turkeys to sell in the fall of the year when visiting. Miss Lynna and sister Lucille sold hundreds for a good profit since turkeys ran wild in the cotton fields to eat bugs so that sprays weren't needed to pollute the land. A turkey would eye a grasshopper and chase that one insect a mile until it got caught and then et up whole while that beady eyed turkey was running over dozens of other more docile grasshoppers but that is like the way a calf roper has to zero-in on only one calf and chase it or else all will get away. But that is concentrated commitment for sure. Never needed the expense of chemicals to control pest on the old home place back in the good old hard working days because an angle was fast figured out on how to get rid of the pesky things with no expense while also earning a dollar or two in the process. Now, that is the true old American spirit of enterprise that is long lost. And chemical sprays cause allergies as shown by more and more children being born with incurable allergic conditions all the time so society is killing itself deliberately as its own worst enemy not to wake up dead some morning soon from our own ignorance. And too there were no wild variments or predatory animals allowed to kill the turkeys and chickens that ran free in the fields; the Great Depression hard times had made trappers out of even city slickers so all the rabbits, foxes, coyotes and wolves along with mean wild dogs had been et up into some kind of family stew. It took twenty years or more for the wildlife to replensih itself into the woods again to kill off the farmers' livestock (and now the stupid government agents want to introduce wolves, foxes and coyotes along the creeks; all that will spread ticks and fleas for hundreds of miles up and down the riverbeds besides the variments eating the newborn calves and all the chickens they ~~h~~ can catch). It is a crazy world that allows the stupid to rule the good sense of the experienced landholders. It was a coon's age or once in a blue moon to see anything wild coming to the barns late at night to eat our animals during the middle of the night to awaken us all when the dogs bayed and charged the predators. Of course, Miss Lynna shot the dickens out of the o'possums and the volves for sure. Only once on the old homeplace did the old timers use chemicals for a good effect.

We had a big problem at the old homeplace that only DDT could cure; we had fleas or old fashioned stick-tights that are very small, much smaller than regular dog fleas. It was a year round pestilence or infestation for sure. They were under all the barns and all 27 out-buildings including the house itself; we kept chickens under the house because they ate the fleas or else the stick-tights would have chased us away, taking over like a slave master. We even painted the batten boards with creasote and kerosene which only drove them back into the cracks for a few months, never killing them until modern DDT was sprayed onto every board on the old place; we killed those f~~leas~~ fleas with only one round of spraying and they stayed dead, killed out for over thirty years now. The fleas lived in the dirt or soil and layed eggs by the billions. My little boy would get covered with fleas from head to toe; his legs looked painted black so we had to pick them off and kill them immediately by squeezing between our thumb nails or they would hop into our hair and hide there all night, crawling and itching us to death. Kids are a peck of trouble but then

when they are yours so what else is there to do but cater to their needs; the only way to shut up their whines is to provide something good for them all along to do. Well, when my little boy would get dirty from playing and have lint in his navel or belly-button fuz as he called it, then the dirty build-up between his toes in his socks of the boots he would call that toe-jam. To this day, we call caked dirty on the toes toe-jam or that's nothing but toe-jam dirt we say. Parents have to make a fun game out of keeping clean or else one becomes a nag and a jail keeper in what was otherwise a comforting homelife. Takes imagination to keep kids happy and busy doing good things that they don't realize is good for them till later in life.

We had pretty good entertainment at home with the children and included the few neighbors who wanted clean wholesome fun without cussing and ranting. My wife and me (I know to say I but I sounds so haughty when having fun with the kids) so we all whooped and hollered among ourselves. We listened to the radio and sometimes went to the movies and talked about the morals or a lack of them in the movies later. Thus we knew about the outside world so we were no hayseeds or hicks like folks up north say Texans are (I learned this sorry fact first hand when World War II brought Yankee down South). My father-in-law had a battery powered radio with a long wire for an antennae from top to tree limb connected into his house; the radio got all of President FDR's fireside chats and of course the Breakfast Club show; also got Amos and Andy. Jack Benny was a laugh a second as well. I would laugh till I fell off the couch and rolled across the rug as the old saying goes about letting the good times roll. But the least wet blanket of a hateful retort by Sister-in-law Beryl would just floor me: she floored me more than once let me tell you; she and Miss Elsie had nasty-nice verbal bouts that would put Kruschew and the United Nations to shame. But between you and me and the gate post, I was just a homebody who wanted to relax and laze around the house rather than fuss and fight like the real McCoy's that those sisters-in-law of mine were. I always told them that we were not going to get out of this life alive so why be so mean just because you know how to be so ornery. It is midnight and getting darker all the time with them is what I would tell those fuss budgets when the angry times got going really loud.

I didn't have ice water in my viens when it came to those squakers of a sister-in-law. The only thing that stopped their fuming and fussing was a cyclone to scare the day lights out of them and all of us for that matter. The funnel cloud of a tornado would turn the daytime sky pitch dark as if it were indeed midnight to cause "dark-thirty" as the old timey folks called such a pending storm cloud. I am no ignorant fool so I ran for cover to let them sisters-in-law quarrel their anger away before God's fury itself was unleashed, for surely they conjured up those really bad storm clouds with their mean words so loud all the way to heaven's gate. Some of the men on the old homelace would reach for a snort of the houch to drink their woes away during a fuss budget time during that Great Depression and thus would be feeling no pain when the full brunt of the funnel cloud hit, sounding like a herd of wild horses or buffalo on the stampede up the driveway (or inside the house all the loud shouting by those women at each other was as bad). The roaring wind outside was about all that could stop the constant fussing of those sisters-in-law of mine. They were way out in left field or they were in their own vacuum of discontent; I could always commune with nature about then so I always talked aloud to vent my feelings during each powerful wind storm and talked a blue-streak to mother nature as I headed for the barns and far away from the windy talking of the ladies that surely had brewed up that mean storm from mother nature. But those sisters-in-law of mine would stop temporarily to flee to the storm cellar or else they might have come up missing for ever or found themselves dead someplace untidy. Besides, they liked to be down in the dingy and smelly storm cellar where they continued to make snide remarks amid the rest of the family in cramped quarters. Meanness ruled for sure.

We survived somehow all the hate and the fury of the storms amid the family. But the family arguments were the most lasting devastation of all, enduring, with resentments being what they were to last a lifetime. Our nose stayed out of joint as most of the time and is the worse storming anyone can get or have to take. Faults are thick where love is thin so I knew my relatives for what they really was. And that is out of the question for me to discuss their short comings and not mention mine as well. My own character flaw allowed them to continue flailing me and my loved ones so I should have fled long before I did.

The new decade of 1940 saw me going to Texarkana to work full time on the extra board while my family stayed in Commerce for the kids to go to school there. I was surprised to hear that the new 40's were full of opportunity, calling them the filthy forties while the "thrifty thirties" had passed into history. War in Europe had opened up the money flow for sure or so-said the economic analyst. Hitler was exactly what the money pot of democracy needed to get the free enterprise system going great guns. A regular paycheck will make you overlook a lot so I was too busy anyway earning my salary to analyze the ethics of the new economy that was making rich people out of the war effort since that new ammunition depot was being built at Red River arsenal. But I still feared that my extra board job would end each time I was paid so I refused to move my family until certainty prevailed for a chance.

I finally became somewhat secure in the idea of a regular job on that extra board job in the Texarkana Cotton Belt yards so I went where the work beckoned near that army ammunition depot; I wore "general shirtsleeves" clothes as a badge of honor to be a blue-collar worker with a paycheck (but soon learned that society folks detest less than stuffed white shirts in their midst). Just can't get ahead in this life unless a member of the country club set on their Republican seat of authority so opportunity goes to the big wigs in town as usual. But short sleeves in the good old summer time beats wearing a tie and coat when no air conditioning exists so I gladly wore my unofficial uniform as "General Shirtsleeves" to work. I roomed where the laziest woman in the world lived; she was so slow the dead lice won't even fall off her when she did move. And she was too lazy to scratch where it itches even if it was in her britches. When she dies, no one will know the difference--that's her speed all time for you to see. Seeing is believing that she was so lazy or trifling at avoiding work so I wondered how she survived the Great Depression.

My energetic old dad with all his ailments could out-work that lazy woman; he was of course still living back in Commerce with my brother William; they raised a big vegetable garden and hogs to butcher in the late autumn. I helped out when back there between jobs; my dad used every part of the hog, even the squeel caught into a box to sell as a toy at Christmas time. And that is not a tale, or else I am a ring tailed tutor for sure in this life that I will never get out of alive.

My mother and dad still had the biggest quarrel going in the history of Texas. It certainly lasted the longest of any on record, from the time long before I was born till they both died, never speaking to each other again. My father was blamed for the death of his brother Ike's wife Jeannie Sullivan Taylor. Aunt Jeannie was a double aunt since she was also the sister to my mother Laura Estelle Sullivan Taylor. Well, once we Taylors like a family we love them to death by everyone marrying into it. Anyway, two Taylor brothers married two Sullivan sisters on the same day of a St. Valentine Day in 1880. They wed the girl next door so to speak; their old plantations adjoined each other just north of Winnsboro, Texas. The Taylor place named Cherrywood was prosperous and elegant while the once-splended Sullivan place of over 64,000 acres was in genteel poverty with tumbling down buildings. Henderson Sullivan, my uncle, was too much the Southern gentleman type to work up a sweat or raise his voice in anger to anyone who did not work hard on his idle landed estate. Thus, the good natured Sullivans were a prize social catch since they never said a hateful word to anyone, their being too aristocratic elegant for words and all. The Taylors were go-getters and grandmaw Miz 3-M Taylor was the richest wider-woman in Texas so it all balanced out in the long run since Granny Taylor approved the marriages into the local gentry class way back then. She had enough money in cash to go around for them all to become new millionnaires several times over (Granny had been a Civil War gunrunner and had a million twenty-dollar gold pieces stashed in the root cellar when the War Between The States ended). Plus she had \$585,000 in cotton to sell when that uncivil war ended and then each year \$125,000 in cotton was raised on her twenty-thousand arce plantation or farm then; thus, Grasslands as the Sullivan acreage of 64,000 was named could have really earned a fortune if Uncle Henderson Sullivan had been of a mind to work his ex-slaves and share croppers like the Taylors all did. Anyway, the energetic Taylors and the doo-less Sullivans made an interesting love pair or strange bedfellows of a marriage.

Well, the honeymoon lasted two years or more; both couples all got wed as a big event on both plantations celebration festivities. The wedding ceremont took place

at the old Sullivan Grasslands homeplace that granddad Doc Benjamin Sullivan built for his wife Laura Giles Sullivan and the elegant but expensive reception occurred over the next hill at Cherrywood where the Taylor-made victuals were out of this world good according to Nigger-mammie Duggan. And then a fine carriage with six fine horses and a supply wagon along with the old nigger mammie Duggan who raised my mother and Jeannie after the Civil War diseases killed their parents along with the Taylor family body servant named Boyee or pronounced Bowjee went along to do all the hard chores on the trip. Their honeymoon took the King's Highway down to Galveston for weeks on end until they were all nearly too weak to go on. Then, they took the Old Spanish Trail into the citrus valley as it is called today. The newlyweds toured the state of Texas in those 1880 wild days or wild west days, stayed as guests on big ranches along the way around the state with the Taylor retinue and of course hard cash of gold coins that grandmaw gave them to spend to enjoy themselves in high style as the most assuredly did. And that grand tour lasted over two years before the luster wore off and they returned to every day or ordinary lives. Those newlyweds never parted company for the rest of Jeannie's life; they stayed together in love and adventure and business ventures as well. When Grandmaw Miz 3-M Taylor died in 1885, four Taylor brothers trekked westward to keep Nimrod Taylor Junior from being hanged by that shirttail sheriff of Winnsboro. Grandmaw was the richest wider-woman in Texas but more important she was headstrong enough to physically protect all she loved and held dear. She had a plan to continued keeping Nimrod safe long after her death and she paid dearly for that. She left a million dollars in cash to each of her 9 children since she had twenty millions stashed in gold plus her fine 20,000 acre homeplace named Cherrywood. Grandmaw Miz 3-M Taylor left special funds to care for her grandson Nimrod Junior for the next 60 years or so. All her grown children minded her whims even after death. Even in death for she was a force of fearsome quality--remember she was that slip of a girl who dug a cistern or deep well all the way to China just to see what she could see and she even threw a Yankee army off the plantation so surely she could come back from the dead to haunt a wayward family child that did not surely stick together enough to protect poor little Nimrod Junior who was all of 18 years old then. The obedient family headed westward and stopped at old Black Jack Grove, which was a saloon stop 76 miles east of Dallas on the old King's Highway or Road to Jefferson as folks had started to call the 1688 Highway now; Black Jack Grove or called Cumby now was the meanest town in Texas then for decades. Cutthroats hung out there so the lawmen did not pester folks at all and thus Nimrod was safe to wander about and all around. Well, only 2½ miles due north lived a good friend of poor dead Miz 3-M; the friendly Sarah Alexander Winniford had also lost her husband from ailments inflicted by the uncivil war between the states. The Taylor clan visited and camped there at the old Urbane Alexander land survey place now called Winniford Way, but the wagons were not allowed onto her land because of the negroes accompanying the Taylors. No black faces had ever been on her land so Sarah being from Springfield, Illinois originally and also since she did not believe in slavery was also a family friend to old Abe Lincoln. Aunt Sally as she was called did not permit negroes on her property because that would bring the blot of slavery onto her children's children as the Bible says about sins of the fathers visited upon the children's children. Aunt Salley believed in states' rights down to the last letter of the law but not slavery (the Civil War was not fought over slavery at all; the rights of the individual over property or above companies was the issue so the Robber Baron industrialists won their lobby force to have their companies to have rights beyond those of a living person so the blood-and-guts living individual should always win over a lifeless company grievance but we all know that money and power mean more than a poor person with no well-connected force in government). Well, anyhow, Aunt Sally just happened to mention that a new railroad just 9½ miles north of her place was being built and could take the Taylor clan way out west so they hopped it over that way the next day. Sure enough a railhead to pick up called did exist. It was called Cow Hill for want of a better term to aptly describe where cattle were assembled while waiting for a freight train to come load them up, taking about a week or two to come along. But lean-to buildings for saloons as entertainment and grocery stores and a hotel of sorts existed for meager accommodations while waiting for days. Even a month could pass.

Schedules were not a regular thing if at all so a week was considered fast and a monthly run was more like it if lucky to sell cattle, or other goods but all that soon changed. Anyway, the Taylor-made way of doing things got put into effect soon. This business opportunity at Cow Hill was just too good a thing to pass by so Unk William Taylor invested his gold cash in a mercantile-livery stable right away but he chose a site just two miles west of Cow Hill. That cow hill smealy place along with a general store merchant Jernigan, near an older store owned by the Jackson family was the preferred spot. Store goods had to be sent to the new settlement so they wrote the bill of sale of lading to a place called Commerce. And that is how my old hometown got named with a little enterprise by the Taylor brothers on their way to California or wherever westward to hide out with Nimrod Taylor, the outlaw killer of 9 men who shot his dad dead just before he was born. Unk William soon owned a hardware store that was what he ran till he sold out a few short years before his death in 1934. Unk Ike Taylor established a dray or delivery service to bring goods to the Taylor store and others of course and then Jim Taylor started a domino hall or pool parlour that today would be a social club or rec hall place. But my dad George made home brew and sold it by the gallon jug; that was legal back then. Also, he had the wanderlust so he became a guide or trailblazer into Indian Territory since so many Texas folks were wanting to go that way for adventure and for gold mining along with squatting on land. Daddy also went hunting for gold himself; he nearly found it too as he often said. Everyone had gold fever back then; folks wanted something for nothing, just like getting all that wild Indian land for next to nothing in the olden days. Human nature ain't never changed since the days of Adam and Eve. When something seems just for the taking, then some folks will naturally be there to try and take it all. Daddy went and took his family so of course his brother Ike and wife Jennie went along. They met Indian Chiefs, even the last powerful medicine man named Wovers who predicted the end of the Indian nation of the old time ways with his famed words: "The sky will turn black all the time and all flying things will fall down forever and the green earth will become brown and unproductive; then, the poor land will be forsaken by the greedy whitemen who will abandon it all just as they stole it all from our people and only then the poor Indians who are accustomed to nothing good will be the only ones left alive to reclaim all the once bountiful land. And then the bounty will return for us Indians to keep as we know how to live in harmony with the soil and our human needs rather than destroy natural beauty for greedy money." Now, that is some fanciful tale that even I could never imagine to tell as the truth if I tried all day.

My daddy and his brother met all those old timers for sure. But the snow got so deep every winter that you could not see the sky; it just about killed everybody who got snowed into their cabins for the duration since food ran out. Thus white folks came back to civilization back then for sure. Only savages knew how to survive those hard times. But one winter, the first snows came early and caught them Taylor brothers with their families in the mountains, of Oklahoma, all 4 chains of those mountains. Jennie was pregnant and then had her baby during the blizzard but she died and of course the baby lived like they always do when the mamma dies. Yet that baby was said to have died but my sister Lissie always said it was she and that our daddy was not hers; she hated my daddy so much that she always said that story over and over till the day she died just to hurt daddy originally I do think. Dude or George Taylor Junior was also born in Indian Territory on the same day that was daddy's birthday; hence, the same name, being birthed on President George Washington's birthday anniversary officially just as was daddy during the uncivil war at a Confederate hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. But grandmaw recorded daddy's birth being at Cherrywood where all her children were born since she was in charge and wanted it that way on paper rather true or not yet she told the truth all the time but wrote differently in the old Bible records. And she always pretty much got waht she set her head to have out of life. Stubborn for sure.

Daddy was a guide for the families going to Oklahoma: the Butler, Wilson and Landtroop families into Oklahoma Territory were among his many clans to be guided. They were all interrelated and finally the Taylor clan married some of them cousins who owned land and a good reputation to boot. They all had a flare for the good life full of exciting things such as Luther Landtroop raised Lena Rivers, the

Indian princess from Oklahoma with an oil fortune so that was some tale to tell. Emmitt Luther Landtroop's wife Irene Sealey Landtroop really worked that rich little oil heiress nearly to death for the sake of learning the work ethic and that heartless tactic made the gal flee to Paris, France when she gained control of her millions and eventually drank herself to death on all that firewater that made her go wild, making Miss Lena a good example of all that was bad to do in life after she died of living the good life in gay Paree. Too much of a good thing will finally kill you for sure. Luther Landtroop had a way with women that always ended in a bad way for the lady, starting with his jilting a Cumby area sweetheart at the altar and that was why he fled to wild Indian Territory. He was a ladies man all his prebescent life onward, not to be trusted with your budding daughters. Luther never molested anyone sexually; he dealt with those above the age of consent but held out on marrying them in an age when the honorable thing to do was to wed the deflowered woman; he was a cad well ahead of his time and would fit in today (in fact, he always visited two or three times a year his sister Maggie Winniford and even dated the widows of Cumby, including the elderly lady whom he jilted as a youth; Luther still had his charisma in old age, left over from his roving days).

The cousin Welcum Wilson put his energies into making money, big money, rather than seducing the ladies (even though Luther owned land by the section and ran his own 4 chair barbershop for decades). But Welcum Wilson III eventually took all the hard work of the generations of parsimony or close-fisted and grasping scrimping to become a millionaire, making a real fortune that the first Welcum Wilson would surely appreciate. Or the founder Stewart Wilson who fled the diseased tuberculosis of Florence, Alabama in 1889 would duly be impressed and amazed that his grandchildren would be so wealthy. Becoming a big oil baron out of Tulsa, Oklahoma was more of a dream than the original settled into Oklahoma Territory ever thought possible. Yet all the prissy religionists said that Welcum Wilson III was predestined to do as he did or that he got born just to become a big oil baron (free-will seemed to be a lost concept when justifying wheeler-dealing in the name of God). However, Welcum Wilson III lived a great deal of the time in oil-city Houston, Texas where he manipulated his oil fortune mostly. He helped finance a quarter percent of the Houston Opera hall when it got built so Welcum was no slouch in doing his civic duty, no slackard in a grudging way with money for a public monument that only a penurious soul could have created first. A skinflint will surprise you once in a while when taking a detour from their miserly venality. A scrooge type is easily understood with his ungenerous behavior or covetous ways but tis interesting to see them want to be remembered by posterity as a patron of the arts which is just another greedy usurer to gain public opinion acceptance with the check book extortion which buys good will forever in stone on that public building. The rich buy their way into the history books and get their names engraved in stone on the cornerstone of public buildings. So be it, if that is the way America chooses to squander its people resources on the less noble aspiring of society by setting greed as the highest standard of rewards in high society. Well, I am going my way to be too noble to stoop to that level. Anyway, I come descended from a long lineage of folks who did what they wanted to do by just being fun-loving average people out to have a good time to be cavalier about it all. My daddy set the pace in life for me; he was a trail-blazer or pathfinder literally for settlers or squatters out to grab land in old Oklahoma Territory. He tour guided my wife's kin originally as well as thousands of other land seekers. One group of religious folks provided the best memories for my dad in his advanced old age; while crossing the mighty Red River into Oklahoma, an eddy of a quicksand bog in the middle of the big river suddenly made itself known. Well, the prim preacherman had lectured my daddy for days all the way on his foul language and insults to the good Lord when addressing the beast of burden to haul ass up rocky hills and over steep ravines, lecturing my dad that hell's gates were waiting for him surely. Suddenly all the wagons got caught in quicksand and were waiting for him surely. Suddenly all the wagons got caught in quicksand and were going down fast. My dad cursed a lot when he was happy so you can imagine what he said when he got mad or upset like being caught in this eddy in the middle of the huge river, usually. But this time my daddy decided to be mild mannered in a fine Christian-like attitude as the preacher's household wagon was about to go under. Daddy was just sitting back on his horse not saying a word when the fine preacher

suddenly began to beg my daddy to get off his high horse and help save his damn wagon: "Cuss'em, George; they understand your foul language, not my nice words." That command really inspired my good ole dad to do his duty in the name of God's handmaiden, the preacherman. And they all got saved that day, especially the household goods of that scared preacherman.

But my mother never spoke to my daddy again when they got back to Commerce. She certainly was not angry about the cussing; she was mad as hell about the death of her sister Jeannie during childbirth when they had all planned to leave early to return to Commerce to have the baby in a real house, not a sod hut during a blizzard. Mamma never got over her mad, giving daddy the silent treatment that eventually chased him away from the marriage bed but they had two more children (me and Lissie) during that silent treatment for sure. Mother raised Lissie as her own since she would have been a double first cousin for sure with the same last name anyway; no official record ever indicated that Lissie was other than my sister, yet Bennie Ike Taylor was indeed my double-first-cousin and playmate so then why didn't Unk Ike raise his baby girl also (but a baby is harder to manage than a 3 year old boy). Anyway Lissie felt cheated of a father when daddy had to leave Commerce town so she got back at him verbally with abuse that he was not really her father after all. Kids will hold grudges forever until they become parents themselves of angry children who get even with them in kind or in turn. Well, daddy went to work as a carpenter building tall wooden oil derricks in the new oil fields after the 1901 Splendletop strike so my father had three distinct professions or lifestyles: (1) a Southern gentleman cotton planter on the large Cherrywood plantation and then (2) trailblazer or pathfinder tour guide into Indian Territory and (3) finally as a roustabout in the pioneer oil fields of Texas and atlas (4) 29 years of retirement lifestyle when most folks barely reached old age to retire at all so he was ahead of his time as well, doing what few others ever did but then that is the Taylor-made way of life. Now, my dad had real lively tall tales to tell about life on the road of life; he could entertain you for years with what he had seen and done without repeating an episode twice, no boring stuff from him like with me. He put me in the shade with his entertaining stories. My truth is scarce as hen's teeth but daddy's was the real stuff for sure. He had the demeanor of being believable; he had wrinkles to prove his travels. Afterall wrinkles are a roadmap to old age or actually a historic record of life experiences.

I missed out on travels with my daddy since I got birthed in Commerce just when it had become respectable by my time. When I was born or come along, all the real excitement was gone. Folks had to be prim and proper, better than themselves for sure. The new college brought a sense of elegance with a social push to put on airs. In 1894, the college was called a Normal School because it was a school teacher training kind of place and was built on the Uncle William Taylor land. The local businessmen of Commerce underwrote the expenses of getting Professor Mayo to move it there from Cooper, Texas when the first college burned. New little-ole Commerce got the college because Professor Mayo was married to the daughter of the Christian Church preacher Booth in Commerce (the famous Booth family who owned theatres in elegant New York City and also kin to John Wilkes Booth who shot President Lincoln). Well, the Booth family is a far fetched but true story that they knew poet Walt Whitman who had visited the Booth family in Texas and all had walked to Dallas to enjoy the countryside and thus a tradition at the college springtime functions to have a trailride of sorts from the college to Dallas. But the most interesting of all wild tales about the Booth family was that they had gone west to protect their relative from the law; that John Wilkes Booth had not been killed afterall and was alive in wilderness Oklahoma: a man going by the name John St. Helen, who committed suicide in Oklahoma in 1903 was believed by many to be in reality the infamous Booth in spite of identification of Booth's body and the reinterred body in the Booth cemetery plot in Baltimore in 1896. Oklahoma and Texas had become the center of wild but imaginative things connected to mainstream society in America. Anyway, Uncle William Taylor also helped organize the very first Presbyterian Church in Commerce, true to our Scottish origins of course. That was my hometown legacy and my kind of town for sure, could easily have been named Taylorville but we Taylors are too busy doing our own thing to give ourselves that much heritage to live up to. And of course we are too humble for such pretentions. Besides, we would have had

to be better than ourselves wanted to be; we are good enough as it is, let me tell you right now. We could not stand anymore of a good thing than we already are??? Taylors are the peak of perfection and that is true because we are the fifth most prevalent name in America because so many folks want to appear respectable so they just took the best sounding name for that purpose. Never would I pull your leg unless given the chance.

Commerce is an exciting place to live, being a young town with no long time history a lot really did happen around there. The famous bank robber or train robber Jesse James even walked the main downtown streets of Commerce. He taught school along with his brother Frank at Horton which is a small farming community east of Commerce town (a bedroom community if you will to little Commerce). Jesse James was never killed as the history books claim. He set up a lot of that hype so he could start all over again in a new lifestyle; my wife's uncle Charlie Butler who wed Lula Landtroop met the James Brothers face to face back near Florence, Alabama during a train robbery at Mussel Shoals so he knew Jesse James personally when he saw him years later in Commerce buying household goods. The Butler diary has all that good stuff recorded in it, plus another book written by Lester Snow in Mountain Home, Arkansas claims that his grandfather Vaughan was actually Jesse James after assuming the new identity; Jesse James got another ten thousand dollars as the reward for being killed, split of course with his relatives who did the deed so that hoax was yet another great train robbery of sorts on the robber barons. Like I say, Commerce is full of legendary tales of truth and fiction let me tell you here and now. Why all the Butlers along with the Landtroop kin and the Wilsons and Ellis relatives know about the countless caves in Oklahoma making a quick dash to buy supplies or to rob trains easy enough for the outlaws when being their mean selves or also to allow getting lost to start a new lifestyle and new name. Outlaws could easily make a razoo or quick dash out of the rocky caves to prairie lands of hilly East Texas. And the killer John Dillenger headquartered in Commerce one cold spell and my daddy liked to point out all those places with his cane when he walked about town showing the grandkids where old timey things happened. My dad was a real good pointer. He also pointed out that Armistice Day as the first observance celebration originated from Commerce for the end of the war to end all wars happened the very first year in Commerce because Bruce Bracheen Williams was the first U.S. Serviceman to get killed in World War I so that distinction fell to little Commerce town. History was just all over the place for the person who would read or listen to the old honor-bound glory days here. But one has to have brain power for that sort of thing and not have debauchery on their mind all the time or some other such low life minded thing. The gossips do tell it all like it is and the some in glowing details.

We Taylor folks know all the gossips well enough to expect their version and also we know about the gossip before it happens since we are in the middle of things, being kin to over a 100 surnames in the county. Why, we can see a talking spell acoming for sure. That's why I talk up a storm like now. As you know, Texas Tornado Alley exists in the first place because I chased those storm winds all over the state when I was a youngster just for the fun of having something to do, to put those destructive winds in their place or at least in one place. I would do some stormy running now but I don't want anyone to think that I am a coward by running away from things (I am too macho nowadays to run away from anything like a blow-hard wind; a man has got to stand his ground and not give an inch to anything that comes his way, like a kid is expected to dilly-dally about and run for cover or for the covers with some slick date, but no good man can run and then keep on having a good reputation). I got the biggest reputation in Texas to maintain so I hold tight to my premises.

I could just blow hard about it all and just push a cyclone clear out of state if I set my mind to it or put my pucker into all that wild windy business. But then some of my primes detractors would not get what is acoming to them by not experiencing a good tornado wind storm in their miserable lifetime; everyone should go through a tornado, particularly someone who has bad mouthed you, an enemy so to speak. It rains on the just as well as the unjust so I just let the good Lord direct the path of the wind storms and thus just keep big blowing jawboning to myself. And you can bet on that, bank on it. I am not a blow hard for nothing like some big mouthed folks that I know in these parts for sure.

Just don't say what you don't know or don't mean to become well known by all.

Laws are made primarily to make a law breaker; that fact is shown with having laws against liquor; the dry county really causes bootlegging to become big business as in Commerce to this day; it seems that what is made illegal becomes big business for the police on the take. In fact, the police chief Bill Mathias had his whores to ride the back roads and hide liquor bottles under strategic bushes to get picked up later, by the clientele. Pink Dupree was one of the best cohorts for this job. He was an old time friend and a brother to Bill Dupree who was married to Pearl Helms Dupree who was my first grade teacher and whose daughter Dalphna Dell was a friend to my daughter. Enterprising Pink Dupree had a good railroad job but he also stole roasting ears of corn from the fields of farmers when they went to town; Pink sold the ears in nearby towns for a cent on the dollar but all profit to him, except for his clandestine time and illegal efforts. Like I said small towns know about gossip even before it happens. Now all that I done said has been public knowledge for years but the police head the same grapevine or rumor mill but they have their finger in the pie like the nursery rhyme Little Jack Horner (who was by the way another distant ancestor on the family tree of my children) so the police overlooking petty crime sets the tone that certain people are above the law. God is always on the side of the winner since big money contributions to the church building fund makes might right. One local teacher atheist said that God was in the wrong business of religion since he must be a holdy sadist to let so many wars be fought in the name of God and Christianity for profit to the few while the anti-Christ religionists make a fortune from the munitions and the services thereof in the name of patriotism for some glorified cause. But I am not that evil kind of fair weather Christian since I know for a fact that God gives sinners enough rope to hang themselves for the whole world to see clearly if you just wait around long enough to see the outcome when you stand up to be counted by speaking out to let the mean louts know that you know about their double standards. One has to stand up and be counted.

But moonshiners don't earn much money anymore; it just ain't such big stuff anymore in these parts, just carting in the legal booze from other wet counties or wet states makes a fortune or good living from the back-end of one's automobile today for high-faluting folks. The rich always have their country club place to buy the illegal alcohol or the local Athletic Club to get mixed drinks in the middle of the dry spell county laws (ironic that the name Athletic Club is used to mask the real sales of booze just as one says be a good sport about losing to them when we all know that coach Knute Rockney stated that winning was all that mattered so the ideal that an athlete has sportsmanship is hogwash and is a phrase used by the cheats to get you to submit to their taking advantage of you). I am amazed at how fine, rich Christian leaders want to appear pious and against every thing sinful while really indulging all those things on the sly, just not being caught is what counts, in this life. Human nature just likes forbidden fruit so to speak. The good people of Commerce let all that double standard talk masking evil keep on happening because all the gossipers know what is happening long before it officially occurs let me tell you and then they would nothing exciting and lewd to talk about if the place got all cleaned up. I know all the dirt on everyone who had the word on me so we had good trade outs or trade-offs as the old saying goes. I may be good for nothing but they are not good for anything at all either. Life has a way of what goes around comes back around or chickens come home to roost when you crow too much about all your own goodness when it ain't necessarily so. I should know, being what I am, that way and all myself. I ain't nothing but human so don't lambast me again.

Every place has the same kind of folks, some just hide it all better. Cumby is no different either. First time that I saw Cumby was on a rainy day in 1917; me and my friends wuz driving over there to see what we could see. The roads were unpaved like all the highways back then; we had to life bodily by hand and brawn that flivver of a Model T from the deep buggy ruts into the car ruts that were shallow in comparison to the wagons pulled by horses. The wheel gauge was vastly different so the depth of ruts varied with the muddy build up under the fenders. I felt as if I had carried that car all the way there on my bare back like the labors of Sisyphus whose toil pushed a huge rock up a steep hill, only to have it roll back down as the top was reached each time for eternity (I was not always this intelligent in classic topics until my son attended college and taught me all he knew so I learned more just to be a little bit smarter of course). Well, my friends and I pert night did carry that old Model T on our backs. That was a sure-fire tactic for getting a car over those

Taylor 111/111/111

dreadfully muddy roads back them days. Now, you can see why folks did not travel much or go very far in them there days; he mud in rainy weather kept you within the homefolks on the porch or close-by the wood burning stove on cold days to talk your heart out and thus tell all these wild tall tales of a fantasy trip into town or clear around the world to escape the boredom; the idiot box TV was not yet invented to ruin old down-home ways of conversing to entertain everyone and thus to become closely knit as a human power force. Folks are now afraid of each other because they don't talk out their differences anymore. Just like Reverend Doctor Charles T. Alexander was a very human man who was no big deal with his charisma at home that today makes preachers better than God to be worshipped above the Lord. We all knew all the shortcomings of each other and also the goodness of the folks we socialized with. Anyway, we wuz all too human or venal to care about pretenses. Charles T. anyway was an affable man of integrity; his funning you up wasn't a means to disarm you so he could rob you blind like many big time folks do today. The holier-than-thou or better than God haughty attitude is prevalent to this day and time so many folks can't even speak with a nod casually nor do they want to be friendly to anyone not important in the community leadership ladder of success, so they will go to silent heaven and never get to talk to others for eternity I guess.

Charles T. had a kind sounding voice for crying out loud he was a good man. But today, being good means being no-good and thus one must be feared as the meanest SOB in the valley to beat your ass if you displease your neighbor; otherwise, the meek ones get taken advantage of since only loud or vicious talk puts the fear of God in others to treat you nice or else. That unkindley type of respect follows the worst element of human nature everywhere in society since good manners is practically non-existent. The worst element of human nature is now the standard of human conduct. And that is enough to knock the socks off good folks who show kindness to others or else get a black eye. I practice what I preach which is learned from the good book of the Bible since I can read for myself what is required by God.

A daddy has to practice waht he preaches when having children. Kids mimich the parents, doing what they do not just what is said to do. Myllittle boy began first grade in Commerce; he was sick at home with inner ear infections more than he attended classes. We did not have the money to go to a doctor and no welfare agencies existed yet because that was evil and wicked according to allthe hard working folks philosophy. To get something for nothing was horrible communism and certainly not the Christian thing to do. Besides, God would heal those who were worth living so all was the Lord's holy Will and must not be challenged or questioned, much less changed by getting desperately worried enough to get aid from any source other than Jesus. I don't fit into closets or sleep in drawers as the old timey saying for folks like me who kept on trying to get help when no money and no job came during the Great Depression since God wanted us to be poor and we should like it too since God let it happen, but free-will was never allowed to be discussed by the narrow-minded hooligans of the scriptures during those old timey days at church. Poverty times filled the church-house so they liked that attention from the poor folks. No one had funds to go anywhere else so we went to the singings for sure. The good acting folks cried their eyes out when bad times were mentioned and they were nasty-nice to your face about all your hardships but talked about your back as having a lack of godly faith or being punished for some secret sin when these hard times were upon my family yet they had no job but were exempt from sinful punishment. Tis enough to make you despise good folks with their mealy mouthed churchy ways. I got me a job in another town what was no better. But at least it took me a while to resent all the goody-two-shoes types there saying hateful or hurtful things in the name of the Lord. Some folks hurt so much inside that they have to let it all out by insulting you when they can in the name of God. Daddjes have to put up with a lot of buffoons in life or at least in this life.

Most daddies with small children like me were thin as a rail back then because all the good extra food went to feed the growing youngins; being fat was a symbol of wealth indeed, certainly affluence enough to eat all you wanted or needed and that was rare even for folks living in big fine houses like Winniford Way even back then. And to this day being fat is considered a sign of plenty and having money enough to eat all you want, that's why older folks think that being skinny is a sign of doing poorly even healthwise.

But being poor back then helped good health since fat folks were not so common to see; all that fat takes more blood pressure to pump blood through the weight. A regular diet of fattening food meant having a regular paycheck. A job was still scarce and was usually low pay when found. I got a regular job in Texarkana; the war effort was on my side, even though all the fine Christians like me said that I would go to hell for taking blood money earned from the war machinery used to kill others. A guilt trip laid on you is the sadistic desire of most good people who someone they know well is about to do better than they. Human nature is such a mean spirited thing when opportunity knocks at another's doorway. But their prayers did not keep the pending war from happening so their secret sins must have been greater than my need to have a job as I later told them. I went first to get settled in Texarkana so my children could complete that semester of school in Commerce. It rained like crazy when I left and the car tire tracks in the mud of the side yard were protected like prized artifacts as mementoes by my little boy as my wife told me later because he thought that as long as he could see my tire tracks that I would soon return to fill them up and taken them along with me the next time. Kids are always full of surprises about what they think. And so I did send for them. We had to hire Cotton or Edgar Holley to haul our things; Cotton drove the truck like he was churning buttermilk. The floor board shook like an earthquake. He floor boarded the accelerator or foot-feed and then immediately removed the gas pedal pressure or foot-feed to jerk back and forth like on a carnival tilt-a-whirl ride or roller coaster ride in that cab of a truck no less. We were plum worn out when getting there in Texarkana but at least us and our belongings made it all intact.

We lived with Ted Windill family and the Central elementary school was across the street and one block away only. But Texas Avenue was a busy thoroughfare for the kids to cross so my wife had to walk it twice a day for safety sake. The school put on a big drive for each child to bring a piece of iron junk or old iron toy from home because the Japs had bought all our scrap iron the years before from the salvage yards in the U.S. The schools had old iron drives for the children to bring all the rusty iron they could pick up to school; the pile soon got as high as the two story building and covered the whole half block of the front schoolyard. The last pieces of junk had to be thrown from the attic window; the honor students were allowed to do that as a reward. The attic roof ridge was the launching site and what a sight to behold with the principal posed with the student to hurl a piece of iron atop that mighty scrap iron which was to become pig iron for making dive bombers and ships. Kids were busy seeking out iron everywhere when told to look for something to help the country defeat Hitler. Their single minded zeal is a true mind over matter approach. Black-out drills were a constant thing for the kids and they loved it; war games instead of cowboy and Indians were the primary schoolyard games. The bad guys had names like Hitler, Rommel and Gerring; it was fashionable to hate Germans (and that really made sheriff Victor Shaubarger of Liberty County fear that reprisals would be taken against his properties by jealous constituents so he early-on stated that it would be a cold day in hades when the high-sheriff of Liberty County was taken to a reparations camp on the desert; he was an American citizen and would be treated with due respect or else). That never came to pass for the German Americans like it did for the Japanese Americans oddly enough. Seems that it all boils down to who you know and have connections to gain power since Germans are the biggest minority of citizens with almost every surname having an ancestor on their family tree. Texarkana was a booming place with much activity; cars drove very fast and one would not have thought gasoline was rationed at all by the constant traffic jams. Busses remained on their schedule as well and it was nice to live in a town that had bus transportation available. Excitement was happening all the time.

Biggest excitement happened when the newly built arsenal caught fire; the stored tires burned for days. A saboteur set the blaze as sure as I am telling this story, or so the local folks figured. We had a lot of German descent folks living in the area, especially Stuttgart, Arkansas which was named for the roots of the settlers. German surnames got anglicized for sure during this time real fast and no more German lingo got heard on the playground after that fire until well after the big war ended. The labor camps for the Japs really made the German in America not speak their lingo, even Pennsylvania Dutch lingo was curtailed around strangers. And

again Victor Shauburger railed out about the labor camps in Arizona: "It will be a cold day in hell before it freezes over on me, when the high-sheriff of Liberty County himself gets arrested for treason against the federal government based on my name origin; they ain't going to move my German arse to any Arizona camp with no Japs, just because my ancestry namesakes are at total war with the U.S. of A." And that old kraut meant every word of it too. He was a good ole egg and that was that ever said about such notions in the land of the free democratic nations called America.

Texarkana was a boom town all those years and beyond for a spell. It boomed like nobody's business. And the black market business did best of all. Sugar, tires, coffee and tea were rationed along with shoes and everything else everybody needed for everyday use. And a government issued coupon along with the good ole American dollars to buy anything you needed. But gasoline was the hardest of all to get unless owning a farm which gave special occupational status for getting scarce petro. I did not own a car; it was too difficult to keep gas and tires. Besides, the town had a trolley car system that worked like a charm when the electrical top iron rod stayed on the hot live wire; that often slipped off when turning a corner fast and started fires when Christmas decorations were draped on the corner posts with wreathes. And that a fun free show to see. Much to do that was free entertainment but now I was working full time on the regular extra board and had no time to do anything but sleep and eat and then go to work; no time to do anything with my children.

I walked to work, only 10 blocks round trip. The convenience of the railroad yards to our rented apartment was ideal; the homefolks from the farm sent butter and produce in general in large gallon syrup buckets by just handing the containers to our mutual good friends the passenger train conductors in Commerce who placed the gallon bucket containers among their personal items and then handed me the produce in Texarkana. Sometimes, Pappy Harrison would bring the foodstuff to the apartment so he could visit with Ella and the kids for a spell. We liked all this convenience of being a few blocks from downtown and near my job. But all good things must ~~end~~ end.

The end of the inner-city life came with the building of a new home addition just north of the city near Spring Lake Park; Texas Avenue extended its boulevard all the way so it was a distant walk on 33rd street from 5th; we were way out in the countryside since a dairy farm existed within smelling distance as well. This new housing addition was a war effort project built by Southern Pine Company which was the name of the wealthy Temple family holdings, in Texarkana. Young magnate Buddy Temple was put in charge at age 21 to build the first tract homes; every third house was a repeat model style for sure (this work gave the young Buddy exempt status from the draft since he was helping his father and his uncles run the booming enterprises that was building the war effort plants that Representative Wright Patman who lived on Main Street in Texarkana as well (and Sam Rayburn also helped get contracts for his Texas friends). The subdivision was called Sussex Downs and had 144 houses in total, being available only for the workers connected directly to the arsenal work. My war related job with the railroad that shipped ammunition and tanks on flat cars and boxcars gave me an inside track for sure. I purchased my place with nothing down or rather my sweetheart wife did all the initial asking and looking at which house to choose since I was sleeping or working only mostly all the time. The monthly payment was \$43 dollars at every first day for a full year till the so-called down payment was accumulated at which time the mortgage was reduced to \$25 a month for the next 25 years till paid for in full. Anyone who had a job could buy a home that way. Only scoundrels and bums did not accumulate their own place to live back them in those poverty ridden days. That easy to buy a home was the intent and hard work of the local politician Wright Patman who believed that simple house should be made available for every working man. I was no slouch so I took advantage of the generous offer since my wife begged so hard (we were just poor hard-working folks now that the banks had left us poverty stricken). We chose a house with a front porch so I could sit outside to watch the world go by, and to tell my tall tales. Folks once "set" outside to keep cool and to visit. But the war effort made everything scarce, especially no lawn furniture to buy. Thus, I built my own. The scarcity of lumber made me pick up odds and ends along railway right of way so I made my own; the double setee was comfortable but did not have lumber enough for long back legs to brace it. Consequently, when a dog ran up and jumped into our laps, we toppled over

with feet in the air. A funny sight if not happening to you for sure. Lumber was expensive but not available either as some neighbors had to use applie crates to make furniture such as dresser and chest of drawers. But I was allowed to buy the last refrigerator (Frigidaire) in Texarkana simply because of my place of employment when showing my check stub at stores. That status enabled me to have access to buying a dining table and chairs and a couch and two bedroom suites. Having the money was no longer a sure means of being able to buy things; the war effort either had rationed it all or else nothing was being manufactures anymore for civilian use since the plants had converted to army needs; same went for clothings being made into khaki threads. But my wife still sewed like a dream and the flour sacks were still made of cotton material in print and sometimes a solid color, and it took 3 or 4 to make a dress for my wife (that was a twenty-five pound sack of flour which we used one a week so she had nice dresses when wanting them). Sacks also made nice curtains and even bedspreads, with crochet connecting the seams in a high style.

My neighbors were in the war business; a colonel of the Arsenal lived up the street. He was a big wig at the Army Ammunition Depot; his wife hated camp life so they moved to town to let the soldier-boy stay in their element since most of the high ranking fellows lived in Sussex Downs where new houses were the rage now. I liked all the varied personality types of the leadership. The Colonel was in charge of the soldiers who guarded the ammunition and tires or tanks being made there at the arsenal. Goodyear tire company had hundreds of employees living near me; they came down from Akron, Ohio for the duration of the war to oversee making of the tires and the storage as well; making of the tires was actually done in Ohio but the measurements or specifications had to be first done at the arsenal assembly line to make sure that all was proper so the employees down in Texas were officials who knew how to get things done; we all worked together to win that war. The Arringtons lived two doors south and owned Bantum show chickens that they gave my son a start and the Newman family with same age Beverly lived two doors north so those tire magnates were good friends. Then, next door due south was Greg Legree who was a safety inspector for the whole plant operation; he hailed from Charleston, South Carolina and his two sons and wife Frances were a joy (she spoke like a negro who could not be understood by anyone from up north or even here in Texarkana since the Texas twang differs so much from the deep south or Chaleston patois). I was a well experienced switchman for the Cotton Belt Railroad and had to couple railraod cars from the arsenal loaded with annumition shells (bullets and mortar shells) very gently or else a big explosion if jarred very much, none of that slugging cars together like today or slamming them into one another like the careless railroaders do today (I ain't talking against anyone but I sure do cringe when I heard boxcars lamming each other to sound like a terrorist bomb going off today when trains are hooked together in the yards on spur or side tracks). Well, I handled those boxcars like silk with kid gloves on my rough hands. We were all happy as a clam during the weekends when visitng on a rare Sunday; the community commaradie was a joy to hear all their tales of growing up in Yankee land or wherever else. We were working together or fighting together to kill Hitler and all the Little Hitlers in the world at that time; were were as one. We had community school carnivals with cake walks and a womanless wedding even. The men dressed up to look better as women than as guys odd to say or to observe; we filled the schoolhouse at Spring Lake Park and made a mint of money to buy school supplies (the two-story brick building went only to the 10th grade since it was a County School system run district and too that was as far as most high schools went before 1940 before vocational courses got added to train students for the work force). In fact, my wife and I deliberately resided on the Texas side of the Texarkana twin city because the Arkansas schools closed down a few months early because of running out of money so the kids got an inferior education for sure; felt sorry for the poor Arkansas students. But superintendent of Texas side schools was Dr. H. W. Stillwell who devised the little ADA or Average Daily Attendance formula that billed the federal government for the funds to educate students so when the military personnel brought their children into the schools a mathematical formula was devised to bill them by the day so the Texas side had more money but also had a system for knowing what each day's expenses would be.

Sussex Downs was a fun place and the halloween customs became a local tradition from the Yankees who liked the idea of treat and trick concept. Begging seemed a

terrible thing to be teaching young folks, giving them a welfare mentality. But all the Ohio folks brought that event with them and said that the backward Southland needed to get into the twentieth century like the rest of civilization for a change so don't be backward (yet eventually razor blades and poison has been placed in the candies given out at trick and treat in some cities so parents are wise to forbid such practices even by the know-it-all keepers of the standards for highstyle.). We had a doggie named Snoopy Ben that was a fuzzy haired dog half Scotty and half dog in general. Snoopy Ben was smart as a whip; he would more than bark at total strangers: the tone of his bark determined whether a stranger or just a familiar person was at the door on the premises plus he kept stray cats and other roaming dogs far away; thus, we could have a garden without animals running through the greenery and ruining things. Snoopy Ben visited all the neighbors each day on his rounds if they visited at our house first; Beverly Newman was a favorite of his and my little boy and she enjoyed saying the name Snoopy even writing us when they returned to their "God's Country" after the war; Beverly wanted always to know how Snoopy was doing. Snoopy Ben loved ice cream more than any kid of mine; when the ice cream man came around ringing his bell, Snoopy Ben was there paying my wallet pocket for his share before the bell sounded loudly on our long curving street; we always bought an Eskimoo Pie for him to let him lick off the stick like a kid; we had to hold the bar as he wrapped his long tongue around the cold bar. The delivery man had a horse and wagon with 100 pound cakes of ice to keep the ice cream from melting. That sight always tickled Beverly Newman that Snoopy was truly a marvel and she moved back to Ohio with those tales of her Snoopy dog friend. More of my neighbors were fun as well.

Neighbor Neal McKay got drafted; he was band director of the Texas side high school. He later went to Houston worked in the district attorney's office for Johnny Holmes, a kinsman of my son's wife's family. But Neal was district attorney of Hopkins County before moving to Houston. His parents lived in Sulphur Springs where he grew up so we were all old home folks to his teacher parents on their lovely home on the edge of town. But the only reason that I originally knew to become friendly toward the McKay family in Texarkana across the street in front of my home was because of his wife who looked familial. In fact, something in her girlish smile reminded me of Anna Earl Saunders of Commerce. And that little girl smile was still true to form on the adult face. Her father Earl Saunders was one of my best friends during the days when I owned that roofing business and he was the best house painter who ever worked with or for me. Anna Earl was one young person who could fit into the conversation with all ages of folks; she and my wife became good friends even though being of a different generation of course; no generational gap for them. Anna Earl Saunders McKay dressed up like a man along with my wife and they went trick or Treating one Halloween together, knocking only on doors of our other friends who did not at first recognize them. Even during very cold winter nights, Anna Earl and my wife would dress as men to go to the movies so they would be warm and not have to worry about other men pestering them; of course, I was working the grave yard shift. Our kids were doing their homework next door at Francis Legree's when Ella and Annal Earl went on one of their rare sprints to do something silly but out ragous. Never a dull moment, if you made your own entertainment.

Not much entertainment existed during the war years. I had no time to enjoy anytime anyway as I was sleeping or working. There was hardly anyplace to go. The only night life for the few idle rich and young at heart was the night club circuit owned by Nettie Kline, the honky-tonk-queen of Texarkana. She owned the Plantation Club that had big bands on the way from Beale Street in Memphis to Deep Ellum in Dallas so that was the only glamorous and fun things to do in Texarkana. Then, Nettie had a Club Dallas establishment that was a juke box dance floor but with dinner tables and finally the Wagon Wheel beer hall that was a redneck beer hall full of brawls every night that wrecked the few furniture and windows. Nettie Kline had the wild life all sewn up for sure. She was called Nettie Kline because that was her name, and very simply remembered since she married a total of 9 times in all; her original name was Nettie Kline Buffington before she wed Morris Lumpkin twice and then married her club bounced T. J. Berry whose brother Hugh Berry, Senior lived across the street from me in Sussex Downs. Nettie Kline was named for the lady medical doctor who birthed at the old Texarkana hospital back in 1905.

Because Nettie Kline Buffington was married 9 times no one could remember or be sure of her true current surname so she was simply called Nettie Kline for convenience sake and for a semblance of good manners to get it all right. Now, that is no joke as I see the funny truth of the matter. Nettie Kline drove fancy pink Cadillac about town and dressed like the fashion plate she was or a regular clothes horse about it all at that. Rumor had it that she helped sell black market goods taken from the arsenal through her chain of nightclubs. But at the end of the war when all the soldier boys left their tour of duty to protect the arsenal munitions, Nettie Kline sold the clubs twice and got away with the scam. I should know about all her exploits since my next door neighbor just north of me was hoodwinked into that double dealing; Mister Kroelinger paid fifty thousand with a cashiers check to Nettie Kline so while he was reading the fine print of the lengthy contract, she slyly left the office of her nightclub and went to the downtown bank, cashed the check. Upon returning, Nettie Kline stated that the check must be lost and that she had no idea of what happened to it. And that excuse stood up with the local law who had allowed the Phantom Killer murders go unsolved because a local magnate from a fine aristocratic family committed them, along with Nettie Kline helping cover up the local dirt of fine folks in this town of Texarkana.

But the local mafia was on Nettie Kline's side since she peddled black-market goods through her nightclubs all those war years as that was why she always had a set of 4 new tires on her fancy car while the rest of us hard working souls had none but what the rationed coupons stated. Two of my other neighbors worked for Nettie Kline during those war years; Hugh Berry played his band full time since his brother was the bouncer-husband to Nettie Kline during those years and then Hugh Berry's wife Cleo Jaynes Berry and their daughter Peggy Berry Cox waited tables (young Billy Berry shined shoes and ran errands for the nightclub patrons as they were called so lots of inside info got mentioned by the children who overheard all the pout). Plus, Hugh Berry Junior or **Buddy** as we called him was the houseboy for all the other working kin since he cooked and cleaned house, doing laundry so when he had a break and was tired or lonely the teenager would run across the street to our house to visit and tell all or spill the beans over a glass of tea or to eat a meal with us, confiding all the sleazy details that got mentioned. And a few poker games got played at the Berry house; they borrowed our fancy tea pitcher and 8 glasses and the alcohol melted the gold rim right off the glassware. And that is no joking lie either. Or else why would I tell it, ha-ha-ha. And then years later, my little boy grew up to marry the favorite niece of Nettie Kline's; Mary Jacquelyn Buffington was a holy terror and then in Dallas my little Bobby with his wife lived only two streets from that Aunt-in-law Nettie Kline so we found out much more than good people should ever know about that woman (when another murder to a Texarkana native born Donald Morgan happened to show even more connection to Nettie Kline and the Texarkana mafia). This place Texarkana is a dying laugh a minute that will kill you with kindness to keep all the dirt hidden from view (must never tell any of the evil if you want to remain in high society good graces). Well, the murders attributed to the Phantom Killer prompted the sub-divisions in Texarkana to hire a security patrol; each household on a street paid ten dollars a month to have a regular patrolman such as Joe McAllister to drive around from dark till daybreak; all 144 houses in Sussex Downs gladly pledged the fee. We had security police during the whole Phantom Killer scare since Betty Jo Booker was the first female victim and lived nearby on Anthony Drive in Sussex Downs (we all thought that our girls would be next of course as that was the "actuary" scare tactic used to get us to honor the pledge for a patrol force). Joe McAllister was a neighbor who worked at the plant as we all called the Arsenal back then so he knew our needs and fears but most of all knew who really was most likely the murderer connected to the Duke and Duchess of Monfort back in England and sister was married to the Duke tobacco fortune also; the lumber magnate with his Buchanan name kept things in print quiet but could not keep the rumor mill from wrangling its newsy way forevermore. I just know what I hear from my son's friends since he played with those fine Buchanan children after school hours when we lived at the old Windill place catty-cornered from their mutual Central Elementary Schoolyard. All this underground talk as about as exciting as the old timey talking about Nimrod Taylor in Commerce.

Every town keeps bad news alive about the city leaders (and I am here to tell you that is true since I am a part of it now and a product of it as well). Thus, I felt right at home here in Texarkana with all the noise-makers about personal problems of the citizens. Consequently, Nettie Kline was an obvious focal point for all the exciting news and she was highly visible, driving the wheels off her pink Caddallics going only God knows where to do her sneaky business. Nettie Kline had the best public manners in the world; she never ranted or raved or cussed to give anyone of the big nosey gossipers a thing concrete or tangible to use as her own directly quoted words against her. She was Miss Prim for sure. Nettie Kline had learned to use her head for something besides a hat rack for sure; she had learned early in life to avoid the gissipy bait with the same old worn-out tripe of gossipy ploy of getting you to agree with them so they quote you directly as having originally stated their ideas. Nettie Kline was no knuckle head or even a chuckle-head unless she was getting the last laugh on you before you knew it had happened. She was full of pitchmen in a carnival when it came to the gift of gab to escape appearing sleazy. Nettie Kline could side step sin labels for herself with ease; the typical rednecks at church revivals always cried on the mourner's bench that "the devil made me do it" while Nettie just looked coy and surprised that any kind of evil doing could exist in her fine town. "The Devil made me do it" is the illness of those mentally adept hoaxters while sin in general is now just a sickness making the rounds in the name of goodness. Evil consequences show up all the time when least expected when a town doesnot grow in population, claiming a growth cap to hide the real reason for the static condition, especially caused when the same family surnames control most of the city government power slots for decades. Tis enough to floor me and keep my teeth on edge for a lifetime. I had rather be right than president about all this and keeping on top of the gossip wears me out; my whole body is so exhausted my tired is even worn out; so tired my hair hurts and so tired my eyelashes droop when hearing all the tiring or boring stuff. Anyway, Nettie Kline was not pretty or beautiful but she had a silent quality of elegance or self-sustained mystique; she did not wake up in a different world every morning; hers was evidently well-planned for her gains. But Nettie Kline had to move out of town, to Big D where she finally married herself a really big rich man and then became a jet setter in the country club of the air called World Samplers. Now, that is the rich life for sure for a soundalized woman of the world according to Texarkana gossipers.

Never was a dull moment for a minute in those early Texarkana days; most of the hard core news came from Tex Sellers who was the self-proclaimed mayor of Sussex Downs as he often jawboned his exaggerated worth. But he was a good ole boy with a charm to entertain. He invented the upholstered child seat for the barber chair and built a shop onto his garage to manufacture them and to sell for a 17 state area. He continued to work at the plant as long as it was in full-scale war since that kept him from being drafted into the army; Tex was not about to be outdone by me with my war effort exclusive job on the railroad. Sussex Downs had a naked man living in our midst. He was a big builder, owned a construction company; he walked naked as a jaybird to get his newspaper each morning when my daughter walked by to catch the bus to go to work at Automotive Parts that M.D. Hudson owned and operated. Our next door neighbor was now the owner of the house just north, Berniece Allison Owens, who got my daughter Lynna Estelle that job so they went together to catch the trolly or bus when the naked man came prancing outside. Nothing was ever done sexually; he just wanted to be seen in all his naked glory or nude splendor was the lawyer's defense about his wanting to be a practicing nudist. But Berniece testified at the trial that she could not recognize Mr. Neeley with his clothes on since she only saw him nude (no, he was not asked to disrobe for a positive identity in the courtroom). Times were always full of the unexpected back then. But the Phantom Killer struck and that was never solved; the victims were found dead; the man was always emasculated a few feet from his car and the girl was disappeared and not found for days. Then, her nude body was discovered just a few feet from where the deballed form of the guy was first detected. Now, that is some calling card modus operandi for sure. The killer was never caught or no suspects even considered. The killer obviously knew the terrain well going down roads and back streets like the back of his hand; he was a local boy for sure and not a soldier at the arsenal who would not know all the inroads of the town and county landscape to hide. The killer was

really smart, truly intelligent enough to evade the authorities and also from the upper-crust or country club set since he had clout to keep out of the clutches of the law just as do all the mafia dope dealings in this town named Texarkana. Wealth has its privileges. But the gossipers always whispered the name of that lumberman who did it, and the other gossips west of State Line Avenue proclaimed that the auto parts man did it (now, that is all the clues that I dare tell or my life is not worth a tinkers damn) or my family's life is on the line. One-car accidents are the typical methodology to rid the area of anyone who dares to speak-up about the evil in town (must never admit that anything bad exists because the messenger is to be killed not the evil-doers). The major victim was as I said before was Betty Jo Booker who lived on Anthony Drive and she was in a band that played at Nettie Kline's elegant nightclub so that connection proved fatal for the liberated girl who the prim gossipers said should have stayed home late at night rather than be out late; she was just asking for her troubles so got what she deserved; now that is the most mean-spirited thing any Christian community could declare. And the gossips further stated with their know-it-all attitude as usual that a soldier-boy at the guard entry gate had to look the other way when the black-market goods were transported off the arsenal and finally the mafia decided to terminate or kill the cohorts to avoid future problems if one talked too much. That was the pay-off for the stolen goods by the black-marketeers; they got paid off in blood, theirs, for the bad things done in this dangerous town (even they did not deserve what happened to them as a final solution, contrary to what the "eye-for-an-eye" goodie-two-shoes types always gleeful say when bad things happen to folks). I was not enough of a big shot to count with the local big wigs. You have to big shot all over town and at the country club in order to get treated nice and taken seriously enough as an intelligent person since if you are so-smart then why aren't you rich attitude rules Texarkana. I was just a blue-collar worker and minded my own meager business. My family and I had a railroad pass so we got out of town as often as possible, back to God's country as often as possible back with the homefolks around Commerce. My kids had a constant pass to ride every weekend to the farm so they could get away from all the jealousy and meanness. My little boy rode the train after school on the 5 PM Friday express and then returned to sin city on the 6 PM Sunday express train or weekend run. Was almost like a bedroom community for my children. When I rode the rails with the children, I played games to pass the time of 5 hours to go the 120 miles since having to stop at every pig-track in East Texas. Usually, the childhood friends of mine who now worked as conductors and trainmen on the Cotton Belt passenger train watched out for the safety of my children and all other folks as well.

We played Hawk-shaw games which is watching for the railroad company guys who ride the rails to check on the conductor to see if he does a good job. But the dirty dogged Hawkshaw as the inspector of sorts was called by all would change the restroom signs from men to women just to see if the conductor was observant on the job. And back then the trains were full of folks who did not own cars yet and thus appreciated a transit system. My little boy watched with his hawk eyes for the aggravating Hawkshaw inspector so as to inform the conductor friends so he could help us railroad employees do our job. Now that was management against labor for sure so you can see why unions had to exist to stop high-positioned office workers from coming onto our job and then doing mean things to make our work look inferior. Thus, the game of Hawkshaw was serious tomfoolery and my little boy was never any silly business so he took right away to helping out the conductor and trainmen to keep things in the passenger coaches up to snuff or spick-and-span as could be. My boy would go around to the conductor and whisper the news so that the sneaky Hawkshaw never knew who was reporting it all; the walls have ears and eyes indeed when little kids are on your side. I also taught the kids how to gauge the speed of the train by counting the number of telephone poles that whirled by in a minute; the timed count is like lightning and thunder count. This passed time with a constructive bent; no wool-gathering for my blood issue. But usually they rode alone and had to learn how to use their minds and time effectively when not under my direction so they became smart as a whip on their own for sure.

The smart-aleck Hawkshaw never figured out why the conductors on that rail run was onto his tricks. This war of management against labor never ended to this day. And the end of World War II changed the boom economy of Texarkana back to the

doldrums. The women at the plant had to go home to let a man take her job and also the women started having kids again. The baby boom was now on for sure. The only birth control was self-control back then and you know how long that lasts. Tubes being tied was about all that got done in a controversial way since the doctors' nurses did tell who was doing what even though not supposed to do that. But gossip is the mainstay of any group of folks who run out of fancy things to brag about at a party; you know, one group has to talk about someone when not full of hot-air bragging about their fancy new cars or new jewelry since ideas are seldom discussed for five minutes at a party. No one would be able to converse with you if you talked only about ideas and besides America hates an egg-head or a pinko-intellectual as the smart guys are called. Yeap, being smart in this U.S. of A. is not a wise thing to be or to admit to being (no wonder French schools teach more along with the Germans and English schools being superior; they extol knowledge while we berate the brainy kids as being nerds or worse...). Sex is the only real consistent topic of conversation; a real-going-Jessie as a subject as the old-timers would comment. I was still busy working on the railroad since the arsenal was repairing the tanks damaged during the WWII days, doing double shifts and getting overtime like crazy. "Look for you when I see you coming" seemed to sum up what I was living since I was either at work or in bed sleeping to rest up for the workaholic times that I swore I would never turn down work if it came along since 10 years of that awful "great depression." I would come home so tired that I once fell down, flat of my back, caused an earthquake that nearly made California shake to fall off into the Pacific Ocean; I am now careful about falling down hard on the ground or a bed to sleep. Also I fell flat on my face, broke my nose, smashed it flat as a flitter; that's why I am so ornery ugly looking, had the daylights or stuffing knocked out of me so don't blame my parents for having an ugly child. I would have slept in a box of aloe-vera jell to keep from getting any uglier or ancient looking but why bother my ugly self while still fortunately in the land of the living. Now, all of this is talk caused by being one of the "sons of Annahais" which is a literary term for being a liar; telling tall tales makes me happy or Annus Mirabilis which sounds rather vulgar for being a wonderful year of life. All this talking means I should have gone into show business since I been around ever since it came out. All this literary reference makes me brain-dead for sure or at least brain power used up for the week. I once tried to dissolve myself into pure intellectual knowledge by sitting in a vat of mashed up pig brains, just thought it would rub off on me all over. And then I ate only scrambled brains of a young calf to make me more smart brain-wise. But instead I got all used-up energy wise so bad health is my excuse for being so dumb as a sympathy tool. "Cain't never could" describes the doo-less critters who call themselves human in this world. Get-off the pot and do something right now. All of that philosophy is what won the World War II over Hitler. And I know for a fact that Texas old timers really helped win that conflict; the Confederate Air Force really won all the decisive World War II air raid battles. The Germans and Japs saw that Confederate flag emblem and laughed themselves silly, giving long belly ho-ho's for us good old boys to shoot the hellaciousness out of them (the South shall rise again truly was a winsome battle cry back then. Now, that was a proverbial power buster truth and a good claim of a lamebrain to frame. And that's the truth as only I know how to tell it to you! Texarkana and Texas along with the whole southland was alas at peace but the new threat of a cold-war was looming; we needed something permanent to keep the economy going. War is such good big business in the long run of humanity to do all the inhuman things to each other. Folks within each community infight among themselves as well as family arguments that become grudges so the world is only a bigger example of the small units of life; the micocosm versus the macrocosm for sure let me tell you. Nettie Kline soon got out of town so that hush~~ed~~-up the juicy gossip for sure. Then, across the street neighbor young Billy Berry got a job in a brand-new Drive-in theatre on the nearby Loop; he sold orange juice and peddled the liquid in the push cart while screaming ORANGE JUICE to the top of his lungs while circling the access lanes behind all the cars; he interrupted many a good time scene going on in the back-seat of a Chevvy or old Nash Rambler. School girls came home with their sweaters turned wrong side out or in as the case may be. Free nookey was available at the drive-in but for the price of a show ticket that priced by the car load or one at the same cost. This was a whorehouse on wheels for sure.

Aliteral whorehouse existed in the red light district on 3rd Street downtown near the police station and city hall. A big red sign advertised "Warehouse District" that was usually misread as the double entendre intended. All this vice was just looked the other way since end of World War One and the mafia had a hayday selling flesh and dope along with alcohol. The sheriff and police were paid off. And now the really funny thing about all this open vice was that the person who mentioned the existence of the vice became the "bad person" who must never admit that anything unpleasant could happen within the city limits of Texarkana, making good citizenship a laughing stock; talk about the "emperor's clothes." Civic duty was to ignore the mafia and whoring since good folks do not indulge in those vices and thus would not recognize it unless themselves being evil; talk about having your head in the sand. But that is the way conservatives always act, to blame others for their allowing evil to exist. I should have become one of them in this town but I was not ignorant enough to live that way. Wow, that's a double standard for hypocrits for sure. And besides it is more fun to gossip about bad things than to clean it all up and do away with sin for the good people would have nothing to complain about then since talking behind the back makes the small minded folks feel big and powerful when really they are nothing much at all. Caveat emptor was and is the motto of the local wags in this town to this day, just let the buyer beware of all the hokum going on in this brazen town that admits nothing bad exists while allowing evil to thrive. Thus, I was E. Pluribus Unum or one out of many to go my way and let the power structured locals practice their hoax on the sheepish citizens of the town and county. Most folks from the neighboring small towns liked to come to the "big city" of Texarkana to hob nob with the vice and then go back to their home and talk about all the evil in the big city; thus, the title "Little Chicago" was of mythical proportions about the mafia families trading in Texarkana which was the gateway to the Southwest and to 17 states. Thus, Nettie Kline was only a typical gal of her hometown origins; she tore-up all jake getting her share of the action and then left faster than a whirlwind or cyclone tornado with her cash fortune to invest in the constant money making of Big D or Dallas town. Double dealing was the norm but staying alive and healthy required getting out of town fast like Nettie did.

I stayed healthy by keeping my nose out of other's business. I was too busy working the "graveyard shift" to care; I saw the night people of town driving around late looking for action both sexual and financial dope dealing which was primarily marijuana back then or the hemp weed since it grew wild to make heavy duty rope. The smoking rope weed was always enough to hang yourself when getting into trouble. I avoided all that vice by being too tired to get into trouble. I worked and slept and ate my wife's good cooking.

Eating so much made me fat finally, fat as a hog for sure. Could not get enough of the good stuff and tradition requires to kiss the cook when taking the last morsel on the platter and I rightly so was assigned that chore to reward my sweetheart Miss Ella. And that's the real reason that I ate myself into obesity, just to reward my dear wife. You better believe that too. Too much of a good thing made me fat and yet I exercised on my regular job so it was all muscle fat, no flabby ounces on my frame for sure. Such good health was about to kill me unless I lost the weight that had inched upon me slowly but surely.

The big health concerns of the nation or whole country was focused around the scare of polio. Infantile paralysis really hit the country with an impact. Of course the president FDR brought that disease home to everyone since he had it but good. It got to the point that children should not be let outside in the hot sun for long at a time because that factor would cause the ailment to attack. Every lazy slouch that I know liked that excuse best of all, and any excuse even a poor was was better than none at all to them. Every decade has to have its major disease to worry the pismire sanity out of the public, besides that sells newspapers or at least gets ratings which means big bucks to businessmen special interest groups. Something bad for the health is always touted as about to kill off the populace; I just guess that the Black Death great-plague of 1354 got humanity ready for a constant big scare. Anyway, in my youth, Brights Disease and plegra killed lots of folks, plus childbirth got a lot of women on their death bed. Medical science has cured so many common ills that big scary ones had to be "thunked-up" by the media and preacher-men to scare the hell out of the common folk. Polio was now the public albatross. The

whole country was purported to be on the edge of extinction, to perish totally, just as the folks enjoyed predicting about malaria that I had back during the Great Depression days. Scaring folks to death is the big enjoyment of the goons in power as a little authority goes to their head. But I was too busy working my job to worry about diseases killing me before my time. And besides, even syphilis and gonorrhea were being cured by penicillin shots; doctors gave them hypodermic shots in the rump so that you would be sore for a week and couldn't sit down easily after getting the cure of the deadly pox so to speak (and folks did speak about it a lot or else how would I know about this thing????). The immediate cure was as bad as the first pangs of the disease or so folks kept saying when they went for the cure from the sadistic doctors with the long and sharp needles on the arse. Soldiers really got holes shot in their butt every week-end pass from the arsenal to the town when going to the redcross USO dances in twin city Texarkana that was twice as deadly for the soldier boys who spread their pox from the fastest girls to the slowest ones.

The soldier boys came marching home in glory after the big war; we celebrated in the streets and at the American Legion Hall. You know the first American Legion Hall Post #1 in the world was organized in my hometown Commerce; it honored Bruce Bracheen Williams who was the first U.S. serviceman to die in World War I so that honor was given to his home town roots. Well, America celebrated the WWII war heroes who came home enmass with a parade. Next door neighbor Berniece Allison Owens had her soldier husband W.F. Owens all in one piece (she had joined him in Virginia and then New Jersey before the war's end so she rented her house to the Kroelenger family who drove off in their DeSoto auto with the disappearing headlights back up north after Nettie Kline cheated the elderly father). My little girl was now all grown up or so she thought; she attended high school with fiesty Tommy Buffington, the advertising whiz man and also Billie Hargis who was a cousin to Tommy and Hargis became the great organizer of the Radio Free Europe program and fighter of communism. Another neighborhood friend was the father of H. Ross Perot who lived about four blocks over and 6 blocks up toward town from us; we all walked to town that way some times when the bus was late or we felt we needed the exercise to get the blood circulating and of course to see folks and talk to them for the sheer pleasure of it all. Perot family usta to pronounce their name Pee-roe and also like the parrott bird till the media got on their case and preferred to say it ritzy or flucey with the Frenchified style of saying things (the hometown family of Garrouette was like that, always saying their name for over a 100 years like the Garrett snuff company but once doing research learned the name origins were French was then said Garr-root and the same with the Marriott name being Merit until a big motel chain called it Merry-ott so putting on airs is a silly thing but guess if I became the richest man in the land that my name Taylor would be stated Tay-Lar with a long r sound). But I am not a put-on type of person or else I would not be putting my thoughts down on paper, if you can believe such a thing for a minute. But the local wags enjoy saying that money is the root of all evil when the Bible truly says that it is the lust of money that is the cause of evil. Just get the facts straight as my little girl says now that she is all grown up and acting prissy like me.

My little girls went to school with the big shots in town since private schools were not yet the elegant things to do. Only Roman Catholics had private schools for their children so all of us Protestants did not fall for the notion of doing like them with all those false airs. But my little girl decided to marry a Navy boy just when the war ended and he came home with his uniform freshly starched and looking so handsome with his hero status. He was no local boy but his uncle and father-figure who had reared him presently lived next door and worked for Phillips 66 oil company. Earl Rineman was a helper to the two Phillips brothers who founded the company in the pioneer days of the 1920's and Earl was the helper to the Chief driller Bud Adams when they all brought the first company oil well in. Anyway, Earl lived next door to us during the very last 6 months of the war just after the apartment he had at our good friend Mrs. Lumpkin at 27th Street on Texas Avenue or The Boulevard as we in town called that extension of the street met us and learned of the new houses with hardwood flooring in the Sussex Downs Addition. Earl's wife Sadie Chance Rineman was a fat gal who had once run a boarding house near Hot Springs, Arkansas that was a reputed whorehouse as the gossip wags enjoyed saying aloud. That's how my little girl met William Francis Bergen, the sailor boy. Also, Earl Rineman and his wife Sadie saw my sweetheart wife Miss Ella's country home on an oil lease tour and

they decided that wealth beyond the wildest dreams existed there when they rode upon that fine place. First impressions are not always the best. My little girl was duly impressed with the sailor man when she met him. William Francis Bergen looked like a Greek God Adonis so she ran-off to marry him one afternoon late in January; she went with Gwendolyn Hale Marrow who was a childhood friend from Commerce as her dad Coot Hale also worked for the railroad when jobs came because of the arsenal. They always got into trouble together so now was no different (Gwen used to stand on a chair as a child and yell for Lynna E. to kill the spider, you little coward as she called the one who dared to rid the menace). Pot calling the kettle black. That sudden marriage put my sweetheart wife Miss Ella to bed for almost a week; never before or since have I seen her so floored literally enough to go to bed for a long time. Ella never stayed a full day in bed when the children were born at home or when she was sick with a major bout of the flu. My Miss Ella had visions from her own dead father about the sudden marriage; he assured Ella that the wedding would prove good and not end in divorce but would be ever so stormy since her Apollo of a looking hubby was the envy of every woman to gaze upon his countenance. They were a beautiful couple for sure and only had one child, Billy Junior. We enjoyed that lone grandchild but did not get to spoil him to death because they doodle-bugged all over the country for Phillips 66 in seismograph party-chief style in boom towns. My little girl was all grown up or at least though she was, to marry herself a roughneck oil field worker, a real roustabout of a doodle-bugger (must run in the family like her grandpaw, my daddy, to roustabout all over the pioneer Texas oil patch building wooden derricks). Her hubby Bill Bergen had a sister Virginia married to D. C. Parker; her son Quannah Parker IV was killed in early 1981 in a farm accident and all the media covered it. My little girl was soon traveling all over the country, never living in same town for more than a few weeks so had to headquarter in a region for the drillers to work two weeks full time and then come home for 3 or 4 days before going back. Some lifestyle but who am I to carp and complain in general but my little girl was running away from things at our home; she was tired of my drinking sprees and most of all about the bossing from her mother. My sweetheart Miss Ella was too impatient to show anyone how to do what she could do so well herself such as how to sew well or to cook and clean thoroughly in the springtime: Miss Ella just went ahead and did it, ironing a dress or blouse rather than taking time to show how to do it properly saying that it was easier to just do it than to daddle over explaining it. That really is a put-down for a child who keeps getting the message that "you" think they are not worth the effort to teach them. Even my dear sweetheart had a flaw when it came to raising my little girl.

But my little boy was the next full time job and he was growing up fast. He almost did not learn to read because stories had too many fables in the textbooks; he knew animals could not talk from the farm so why learn such dribble. Thus, I could not entertain wild stories with talking animals since all our farm animals spoke not one word of English. So, I had to be creative enough to invent a game like Hawkshaw based on realism for my realistic son. Guess that I was too creative and too entertaining which made him get bored with dull school teachers, yet he became one himself eventually. Also guess he never wanted to learn to read because he didn't want to use-up his eyes, afraid they would wear out until he saw prescription glasses that could be bought. I changed those fears into more fun-time games to read and learn like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. Kids will keep you busy somehow, doing something you never dreamed possible that would become very important.

The importance of my little girl getting married still amazes me. She took charge of that affair fast. She was popular and had dates galore so I told my tall tales to the boys who came to hear me tell it all, over and over. So she was not impressed with my stories since she wanted to get gone to the show or to get a hamburger. I also helped chase her out of the house. She wed as soon as hubby Bill got home from the war front in the Pacific where the kamikazi planes nearly got his ship more than once. He was ready to live life and she was ready to live life with him on the road and far from all that was familiar. He had a job with the oil company on the road. She got out of this poor town easily enough. And my daughter always got herself a job real fast where ever they were hot-shotting to live; she was a got-getter and a very workbrittle gal like all her relatives in both families; she could beat the band so to speak at getting a job and being liked. We visited her little family on

vacation time once a year. During the annual accumulated time that I had, we could use a railroad pass to travel. We helped out at Lynna E's apartment of course while she was at work at the bank (she always got a job at a local bank where they lived). We packed a thousand-mile-lunch as we called the box suppers since diner car food was three times as expensive as a mere sandwich should be and not very good eats. We made trips to the Texas citrus valley at San Benito where Billy was born and then to Brownsville in West Texas to take the big baby Billy back from his visit. And later to Carlesbad, New Mexico. We didn't let any grass grow under our feet in getting to visit our loved ones. We would just get up and go when the urge struck us each year during vacation time. But my sweetheart wife Miss Ella talked too much out of line to my little girl's best friends, saying how she missed her only daughter and was floored for days in the bed at the surprise of her elopement. That news shocked "my little girl's" friends so a big rift soon developed over that talking too much to outsiders of the family and then no more visits resulted for years with love being killed that day and my little girl still has that Elsie Taylor-Winford hurtful look on her face when Sweethear Ella's name is mentioned at all. No one can do a Taylor wrong and then be thought of the same thereafter. A Taylor just never gets over being maligned in the name of love; we are cursed with a good memory like a xerox copy imprinted in our brain. A photographic memory is a burden. But my sweetheart wife continued her headstrong ways as she never learned from a mistake, saying God made her that way to speak the truth at all times. With love like that no one needs any enemies as I kept saying but all my talking was declared bad while the real root of the problem was never admitted as being wrong since that is the way that conservative Christians believe to speak the truth, come what may. But my wife cried and squalled about all that and then she pulled another selfish stunt when our little boy got a job delivering newspapers for THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS and one of his exciting customers was Representative Wright Patman. Well, my darling wife had to boo-hoo in front of little Bobby that he was growing up too fast and she made him unhappy and laid a guilt trip on the child because of doing the right thing and having a job to earn his spending money). My wife loves little children and loves to kiss strangers' babies and hug them so thus she wants to keep her children little or belittled enough to keep them under her thumb nail control. That kind of domineering love can kill the human spirit so that's where a daddy like me has to jump in with both feet and all fours if necessary to save the day. All kids need a daddy to overcome the emotional blackmail that a mother uses to control her children (no wonder the word mother has become a curse word among the modern youth; they hate what loves them to death by smothering their own freedom). I never could convince my sweetheart of her overbearing use of love. "A mother seems to think she owns you, even though President Lincoln freed the slaves, possessive love like that just because of giving you life does not mean the child must be dominated for life. My mother tried that on me since my daddy had threatened to kidnap me so apron strings can become a tyranny beyond belief from the ones who say they love you. Thus, high-toned-ladies-of-quality use their pedestal position to control you if you listen to them; no wonder many guys run away from home since being an orphan can be a mighty good blessing. And then my wife volunteered my son to shop and do errands for free for folks she liked to please saying that it was a Christian duty to do good deeds for free; now, that is using God in a most cruel style; such impudence or such gall amazed me that my sweetheart had no goodness in her heart for her own children whom she treated like slaves and will thus always have a wounded psychic from this. Ella will not listen to me even after our little girl stayed away for years. A bossy nature is forever one to cow-you down worse than a fighting bully in the school yard because goodness is used in such a nasty-nice manner on you. Troubles like this only got worse, never better and yet my big mouth got blamed as the source when the subject was brought-up, thus, to kill the messenger is the mealy-mouthed excuse of all conservatives. The neighbors soon began to move in and out; Tex Sellars rented his house while he went on the road through all the Southland to sell his barbershop child seats. Jane Ann Duggan and her veteranarian husband rented; she was the society-editor of the newspaper. But they had marital troubles and she suspected him of fooling around so she hired my son to be the golf caddy at the country club, just to make sure that he was there

all the time at the country club. Jane Ann kept tabs on that doctor husband of hers for several years like that until they finally got a divorce. She had a long haired Gray Persian cat that was named Cecilia; Jane Ann called that cat like it was a royal personage at all hours until that animal came home. She was a fool over that cat. But so was her husband about the care of all animals, being a really good vet. Another rentor of the Tex Sellars house was Charles H. and Peggy Proetz; he and his family owned a sawmill and lumbermill chain; but his first born was allergic to all dust and especially the sawmill residue in the air. They had to move because of the sawmill white ash that settled on the screens all the time and on the clothes out on the line (many folks had to buy dryers for that reason and it was speculated that American industry wanted such pollution for that reason to sell more goods. But that baby nearly died of the pollution so it seemed that the literary play ALL MY SONS was happening on my street. I felt sorry for the baby though while his folks were getting very rich off the environmental rape of the land. But the memories of the great-depression made everyone too grateful for having a working job to complain or to register a legal complaint. We would either starve to death for lack of a job or else finally smother to death so death seems the obvious fate of all of us living souls (no one will get out of this life alive, to quote an old sage). We lived through all the rain of white ash until the lumber industry invented particle board which used all the residue and then only the horrid odor continued; a skunk was like a chenil Number 5 perfume in comparison to a sawmill. Our lungs and nose were the worst for it all but we could pay our bills as the good Republicans eagerly let us know.

Eager times full of anxiety continued. Even my sister-in-law Lynna Winniford got married suddenly. She wed Cydel Watkins; he worked the land on the place very well but he was a sot. Worse than me. You know, a drunkard so that did not last since Winniford folks work too hard to let a fool squander their fruit of their labors. Miss Lynna had worked her guts out literally on that farm; she had to have a hysterectomy soon after marrying so no children to complicate that ill-fated marriage. Miss Lynna got her name status back in no time flat. Hardly anyone remembers that marriage since it all happened and ended so fast to make you dizzy just to think about it. Cydel was a member of the Church of Christ or at least he sometimes attended with his parents. His mother bossed him about like the way my Miss Ella was trying to do her children but Mrs. Watkins did not think that her son could do any wrong and that his drinking if indeed he did drink alcohol was caused by Miss Lynna. And Miss Lynna had the good sense to divorce that mamma's boy before her own sanity or psychic got all messed up. A good Christian old lady Watkins ruined several lives all in the name of goodness or misuse of goodness. Now, you can see why I am a demon about not allowed my sweetheart continue her ruination.

And then Miss Lynna learned her lesson well enough not to fool around with men who loved their mother's too much. Family will make a family-slave of you if you listen as I so well know. Miss Lynna for the next 29 years dated a man two decades her junior. He was a cattleman and local landowner plus a rodeo cowboy pick-up man. Now, they were a match on seeing who could outdo the other since she knew livestock as well as any man. And he could not remarry easily since he had a wife in the insane asylum at Terrill; Teedrow Crump told jokes about the inmates who asked a man carting a load of fresh manure at the gates of the asylum corral; when questioned, the farmerman replied that he was taking the fresh fertilizer to put on his strawberries crop and the loony John Doel laughed a deep belly buster and said, "You folks say that we are crazy in here but we only put cream and sugar on our strawberries, not messy hockey." Now, that joke was funny ha-ha to everyone except the immediate inlaws of his since their daughter was all locked up, her being from one of the best landed families, the Boswell clan. Humor at the expense of anyone is cruel but a laugh is a laugh when it can be gotten. I should know since I look funny-ha-ha myself in the face peculiar enough now that I am going through the change of life attitudes. Turning age 40 over half my life ago was a trauma; the idea is not bad but suddenly having to wear bifocal glasses is the first noticeable thing about all the bodily functional changes to come upon you. I became a blunderpuss when I once never stumbled or lost things right in front of my nose. Letters looked like melting ice on the 4th of July so I had to get my eye glasses for sure. And then my body weight shifted and I got shaped like a light bulb. Me, who had been so skinny and trim all my life. Guess that chasing all those tornadoes ran the fat off

me for sure. But now I do not look at all like my former fit self. I was fast becoming a blimp. Could fly away if not so heavy. And that is enough to make a fellow turn to drink for sure but then I already had turned to the John Barleycorn. Now, that is scary enough to make a horror movie for all time to scare the living daylight out of anyone sensible. But I was glad to be alive and had to work too hard to pay my bills and feed my face to worry about being ugly or not or even to care.

New next door neighbors became Hermann Tuck and his two sons and wife; they owned a jewelry store downtown. His wife was a deadringer with her curly hair for one of the movie stars; her maiden name was Parks and when one of her brothers showed up to check-out the jewelry store location which they bought the building and re-did it also, he indeed looked like the movie star. But elder son Bill and younger John were good fellows; they all planted a garden and built a pen to raise chickens, white legerands that looked they needed a bath all the time. W.F. sold that house when the price doubled over what his wife Berniece paid and he put a picket white fence around it once lumber became plentiful but not so cheap. All the rationed stuff was on the free market the very next day after the war was announced ended so that shows that a plentiful supply had existed and was stock piled to make it all scarce so we gullible folks would think we were doing without things and food at that to help out with the war effort. And then good friends Gregg LeGree and wife Frances bought a big house on County Avenue just across the Arkansas line so we got another set of new neighbors named James Stevenson and his wife U.V. whose initials stood for nothing but her name. She hailed originally from Foulke, Arkansas about 15 miles southeast of Texarkana but U.V. met Jimmy at San Antonio, Texas where 4 government bases exist and she had work staying at a cousin's home. U.V. came home with a new husband and she had a job at Sears Roebuck & Company while he was a hotdog auto mechanic. He worked for Jack Buffington repair shop and they put my son's bicycle together one Christmas as a surprise while we were at the farm and returned to find the bike behind the 6 foot tall Christmas tree. Some good friends to do that for us to surprise our overgrown son. Yet, my home on Moore Drive in Sussex Downs was a happy enough place to live (Sussex Downs sounded like the name of a country estate house if we had been rich enough to own acreage around the big house called 3322 Moore Drive). And the community life is friendly beyond words, as long as they can borrow from you and conveniently forget to repay until you come borrowing to get it all back as we soon learned. The Biblical command to treat your neighbor well can become a good deed that doesn't go unpunished. Neighbors just ran inside your open door to chat or to borrow a tomatoe or salt or peppers from garden or whatever needed from the grocery store until they went on payday; folks did not often go to a store to buy on a whim. We at least did not so we had a pantry of supplies that made our larder a convenient place to borrow out of. But we liked all the neighbors who were hard-working folks. Pople speak and wave to you when driving by or walking along. We all celebrated birthdays with a dinner outdoors in warm weather and then inside at the dinner table during the cold snaps. My middle section of the block was well celebrated for decades for sure. Summer time was the best part of the year to eat outside and 17 April sometimes was warm but mostly not so at all. We could assembled long tables and make ice cream along with cakes of course and fish fries and later barbecue cookouts. We began eating in the middle of the afternoon and feasted till dark and later. The whole day was an even much like celebrations back in South Texas on my birthday bash there. Only not as full of kin or friends from afar. Miss Ella though did most of the hot cooking since she was home all day while other wives worked in town at a paying job and that meant we had to furnish most of the food. We all chipped in to buy some of the expensive items sometimes. A path was worn in the green lawns from all the houses to the back door from my place; we were the commissary for borrowing as I said and for visiting around the lawn chairs. We also unwittingly loaned garden tools and any other such utinsel that neighbors asked to use when seeing that we had it. And they asked for it all, let me tell you, with us having to go retrieve items as we needed them. Folks just can't seem to remember to return things like they can always remember to go borrow it. I lost a lot of things that never got returned, even my fishing tackle box full of the metal holders for the fly rod and the lures just walked off to some Christian neighbors's house without a qualm. I do remember things for a long time like that.

And the neighbors were good to take up a collection of money for a funeral wreath.

was the proper thing to do as neighbors. No neighbor went without a floral arrangement being sent to any funeral anywhere or where ever it was even out of town or out of state. And the grieved family always sent thank-you notes from half way around the world if necessary, but not any more do folks observe such decency. Good manners is a thing of the past nowadays since it is too much bother to send a thank-you card even and huge price of postage is the vulgar excuse now while back in the old days money was scarce but not manners and the payscale was way below minimum wage now. But my sweetheart wife Miss Ella still collects money to buy wreathes or a live exotic plant for neighbors whose family has a death even of a distant cousin up in Yankeeland. She is just like that, to do unto others even if they do unto her badly as folks are prone today. I would not want to live forever on earth if medical science were to develop a pill for that longevity since people no longer like to associate with each other and tell tall-tales anymore (air conditioning and television have changed human gregarious nature into the worst element of isolation since being outside in the heated sun is too sweaty hot and the word on that idiot box of a TV set is preferred over live human contact with next door neighbors). The polio scare of being in the hot sun started the appeal of air conditioning and then TV viewing as a past time rather than being outside for the fun of it all combined to form the lifestyle of seculding and ostracizing each other on purpose; it is considered a big status symbol to own big TV sets in as many rooms as possible and to have even the closets of the house cool as a cucumber all the time (central air and heat is the aim and anything less is uncouth to hear tell from the "got-rocks" crowd who has to use the possession of things to laud it over everyone; things, not people are important today. All this became definite in 1965 but more about that later. I still liked the basic neighbors who were moving in and out. The Berry house was always rented and my sweetheart wife took charge of the renting and managing all the renters since Cleo Jaynes Berry kept the house even though living in Houston where her three children worked and lived. The Daughter Peggy Berry Cox wed a fellow musical who was fat as her dad and the both of them died of a heart attack within the same year. Widow Peggy worked as a secretary for an oil magnate and brother Buddy worked for Shell Oil research at Bellaire offices. And the fiesty Billy Berry owned clubs in Houston where his mother worked and watched the cash register, especially for the Carafe which is downtown on the square where founder Sam Houston often drank at that club in the 1830's so it is old indeed and the architecture looks it too. We visited my son at Houston and saw all the familiar friends and their places. The Berry clan always drove through Texarkana on the way to resort town Hot Springs, Arkansas, to say howdy and keep in touch; lots of other past neighbors did the same.

A sameness about new neighbors being friendly remained the constant trait of the old neighborhood. The house where Neal McKay lived was now owned by Lorraine Dunn and her mother, a widow (Lorraine had never married, working for Community Chest for 17 years till suddenly being let go to hire a much younger secretary so Lorraine got a job at the arsenal since the cold war was going strong to keep the munitions and tanks being manufactured and repaired to protect us all from the Reds). Mrs. Dunn had a sister Mary Collier Gawonlock who bought house two doors north of the Dunns. Tex Sellers was in the middle with his upholstery shop so they complained till he went on the road and rented out his house for a decade to get away from their loud mouthing or bad mouthing. Mrs. Dunn was the nutritionist at the Spring Lake Park School cafeteria and fed the kids well and cheaply; in the hot afternoons she would come directly across the street to borrow a lemon to make lemonade, knowing full well that I made a pitcher of lemonade each day and would offer her a glass. But she liked our company as we did hers so she never took the single lemon home; we often ate at her house so she repaid the favor well enough, being no deadbeat like some in the community who borrowed and conveniently forget ever to repay. But the best friend of all was 9 houses down the block; she was Hattie Ingram Mize. Other neighbors constantly stated that a lady looked exactly like my wife and sure enough they favored more than the two sisters my wife had back living on the old homeplace. Hattie was also a member of the Church of Christ and the preachers mixed up her and my wife regularly even though the two often attending services together. We soon learned when looking at old family photos one time that Hattie Ingram Mize's mother was a Drennan from Kentucky where the Drennan family of Springfield, Illinois originally

hailed from Kentucky. Tis a small world indeed. That distant kinship though made my wife Ella and Hattie appear as blood sisters in appearance or visage. They were already the best of friends long before learning that bloodline connection; they had a deep Christian love for one another as neighbors and sisters in Christ. Only death could separate them as someday it did. And Hattie's daughter Noreta shared the same birthdate with my son; they had dinners and also traded comic books. They were two peas in a pod and just remained friends as we wondered if they would grow-up to wed like childhood kids do sometimes. And Earlene Mize Simpson lived three times on our street also, raising her two sons Billy Mack and Ricky who seemed like cousins. Little Ricky grew up to marry and name one of his children Taylor Simpson since Taylor was the name that Mize (Hattie) always called my wife Ella and Mize called me Tom. Ella seemed to own my surname more than I did in the community life so it was a good thing that I loved that mother of my children more than my own life itself. My wife and Hattie Mize wallpapered their homes together and we husbands never knew what to expect to find done to the house when returning from work at end of the day. Never a dull moment for sure. Mack Simpson was a good man and a fine Christian husband to Earlene and seemed to love Hattie like his own mother so when his mother died he had a mother still alive he often said (many of the Simpsons were bad news in the Texarkana area being dopers and drinkers worse than me which is saying a lot). I liked all the Simpsons but many of them had to be watched as they could touch you for a few dollars and make off forevermore. Then, the son Winfred Mize married a Hinson whose dad was a farmer; Winfred worked for Sears and was soon transferred a lot. Eldest daughter Lillian was married to Oatis who despised Hattie because he was a Baptist who believed that one could not fall from grace so he did as he pleased to sin in the name of the Lord so naturally Hattie informed him that she was evil as well as only one name for the Jesus's church existed and that was Romans 16:16 that states "The Churches of Christ salute you." Hattie pointed out his errors with the quoted scriptures so they were persona non-grata for sure. But Hattie said she was right and that was good enough for her to obey God's law not some sinful son-in-law. Well, the granddaddy Mize lived in Broken Bow, Oklahoma where they visited often.

We had kin in Oklahoma also so we all visited together up there and of course down here on Moore Drive with fish fries or barbecues. And we all went to church together all the time, making the rounds of revivals of all the Church of Christ congregation in the areas; we sometimes attended 5 or 6 services during a weekend day when the congregations staggered their services; the Negro Church of Christ was the most entertaining of all to attend as we sat in the back or side flap of the tent revival for the Black Church; now their preachers really preach hell-fire-and-damnation to the sinners and surely Oatis would have burning ears from all that said about his type of religious activity. On hot nights, we sat on the auto fenders and listened to the Nigger preachers lambast the sins to hades. Never had so much fun while getting a good lesson in ethics and observing human nature in action. Black folks did not want us inside their churches then but never made an issue out of it though. But the white folks certainly did not want a visiting Black person inside theirs as we all learned when one Negro evangelist preacher-man on a Wednesday morning service casually stopped inside and sat in the rear pew. A big stink resulted about all of us being a bad influence to visit the Negro churches who felt that they should return the favor and that was not desirable. We had to eat humble pie for months as peer pressure is a severe thing in a small town when the rich want a certain thing to continue or not.

Well, I got religion and even went to the AA to clean-up my act. I had to do all that good stuff because my sweetheart wife Miss Ella was about to leave me; she was sick and tired, all fed up, with all my drunkenness and wasting of money needed to fix up the house we were buying. I had to become better than myself for sure on the surface of every day life. I thus started all the good stuff by becoming a born-again Christian on my birthday on 17 April 1949 which was also Easter Sunday that year. You see Easter occurs every eleven years on my birthday or at least has done so since 1927 just after I wed my sweetheart Miss Ella who started all the good luck things in my life. God celebrated that event in a special way in 1927 which was the first Easter Sunday after my little girl was born on 5 November 1926. I was always a church-going daddy and I read the Bible like a trojan going to war but that was not nearly

good enough for the regular church-going kin and friends. They rode my frame until I was convinced that being Baptized into the holy trinity through the Church of Christ was the only true-salvation. My old Methodist sprinkling was just not good enough or sufficient and the devout friends quoted the good book to prove their doctoral point. Well, I read and re-read that Bible until I knew it like the back of my hand before I allowed them to just lead me down the primrose path to eternity. The more that I studied to prove them wrong, the sooner I began to comprehend that they were correct. Was I ever floored. I had jumped in feet first and got all fours going after it just to prove them wrong only to learn the truth afterall was in their urging me to "come study and reason together." Those blankety-bland brothers in Christ had saved my soul for all eternity so I was grateful after a lot of reading to join them in Christ. Prayer was of course useful but God gave mankind free-will so no interference is made in this lifetime so that we can chose or not to be good or bad. I luckily chose goodness for goodness sake because my sweetheart wife Miss Ella was fed-up with my drinking benders. My name was mud with her so I had to appraise my condition and do something positive for sure. I now had a lot of fine friends at the church house as well as on my home street. No more drinking.

And then I went to AA; alcoholic annonymus was a sobering experience. Just standing up and talking about all the troubles was a hard thing to do. But no one wanted to visit me at home to keep me from drinking because I was considered a bad case and also a dozen celebrity citizens had just decided to quit in Texarkana so they got all the attention. Every 9 months they kept falling off the wagon so to speak while I threw my liquor bottles in the drain and quit cold turkey like I was supposed to do if you read the AA book. I had no buddies to talk me through not drinking so a lot of prayer resulted but then I knew that only I had to decide not to sip a dram of alcohol or else all hell would let loose when my sweetheart wife Miss Ella found out by smelling my spirited breath. That inspired me to stay on the straight and narrow path. And of course I wanted to be good for goodness sake with the Lord who of course was keeping score so when I did something good then a little bit of the mountain of evil stones were slowly replaced with a good rock of gibraltar of good-deeds. Now, that mountain of evil being dispelled with the good rocks of Gibraltar is a carry over from all the Methodist preaching that I heard from age one till I wed in 1924 to Miss Ella. The Church of Christ preachers only preach about the Bible lessons and that is why most members carry a Bible to Church to check on the scriptural lesson. A preacher is not really very important as he only is to remind the members about what the Bible says to do so we can go to the Bible directly for the word of God. That means that the silly charisma is nothing as a part of the worship of God so never worship a preacher instead of God. Now, that was my kind of religion to worship only God's spirit not the membership building record of some preacherman like the way most preachers do gain charisma as their rewards.

Well, I prayed not to drink so I resolved not to imbibe. No more drinking sprees. I was always considered too hopeless for any AA buddy to visit my home. Thus, the good reformed reprobates were too good for me while they helped Bob Harris a coworker of mine whose father-in-law was a major builder of new houses in town; the McGraw construction company made him more valuable than me. I had no wealthy potential backer of the AA programs to gain me special favors as only small towns like to do. It was never convenient between assisting the other guys who were their type of folks in Texarkana of their own little click since I was an outsider from Commerce. Like I said, I was the only one to stay on the program without every falling off the wagon; it takes just over 9 months to get the traces of alcohol out of the blood stream and body cells so the withdrawal pangs are horrible. The horrific pain of withdrawal is not easy plus the emotional pangs of being cold-shouldered added to my determination to succeed. That was my motivation. The mealy mouthed AA reformed reprobates became holier than thou with me, saying that I was evil and wicked for ever having taken a drink in the first place, even when I owned a business in Commerce before the great-depression. When their favorite fellows were back-sliding, the cohorts stated that God was teaching them a lesson for some future reason while they sneered at me as if I were white-trash and snealy in their presence. Good manners seemed not to apply to me when I was in the same room with the big-wigs who had rich relatives.

All my relatives though acted proud that I quit drinking and joined the Church. You would have thought that I had done a nearly impossible thing, a real feat for

sure. Even sister-in-law and niece Elsie Taylor-Winniford had good things to say to my face and behind my back. She genuinely seemed glad and happy for me. I guess that word had gotten back home that the AA members avoided me like the plague. I never told anyone this fact in person but only now have recorded that disappointing fact. But then when no AA member ever came to the door of my home to encourage me like the book for AA members stated, then I guess that my astute wife and her kin got the message loud and clear for sure. This must have made them show me more respect than I was getting among my own kind of drinkers or so that AA book had indicated would happen. But that is life in small towns, to treat some mean as hell who did nothing worse than others while the reprobates who go to the right Church get earthly rewards while they continue their nasty sins (but that is how the church beliefs that one can never fall from grace treat others not of their sinful faith). That was also one of the reasons that I liked Hattie Mize since she condemned that religion for its sinful and very wrong religious faith. A lot of religious folks will find themselves in hell forever when the last judgement is called up yonder because the Bible states that narrow is the way and few shall enter therein, which means that not all members of Churches will go to heaven muchless all the unchurched souls. So much for my preaching since I know God personally while the others only have a preacher's impression of some man-made image of the Lord.

Even my niece Loretta Mackey Cessna came to visit me on my birthday Easter Sunday of 1949. She came with herself and a new husband named Carl Rye. They spent their honeymoon in resort town Hot Springs, Arkansas. And they stayed married till the day he died in Houston of a heart attack. He was an oil executive with Humble Oil; he parents though owned a small oil company on their landed holdings; they only made a million dollars a month back then (Loretta had a way of finding rich men to wed; she could attract or smell money a mile away). Now, she was no longer a grass widow or a grasping widder as some cousins sneered but never me to cast a stone at someone else in dire straights. I still love that little niece of mine to this day.

Loretta was like a daughter since she lived with us in Commerce just before the Great Depression began and then we lived near her in Channelview or rather Hardin. We were all close kin who went through many kinds of similar troubles together. She wished me well on my birthday Easter Sunday of 1949 and we all ate a big lunch or dinner as we called our big noon meal back then together. She seemed happy as could be so much more alive than when living as Mrs. Cessna in South Texas. But then the WAC or Women Army Core experience during World War II had shaped her vision onto something more substantial than movieland books or just money to laud it over less fortunate like the uppity folks in Houston area usually did. She was a high stepper with flare like her mother and grandmother Miz 3-M Taylor. Loretta was a good friend to Ovetta Mae Culp Hobby who helped found the WAC; the Hobby clan of Houston was a hard-working rich family so that fit in with my kind of people for sure. Loretta was down to earth and genuinely sincere in what she stated or else she avoided the subject all together. All of us Taylors are like that let me tell you something intimate about my family kin.

I did not ever want the day to end, no sunset on my Easter Sunday birthday of 17 April 1949. My little boy was at the farm as usual with his constant train pass to avoid the evil mafia influences of Texarkana. He was a little bit country boy and a bit of city slicker like me his old man. But he had a vision in the window of the train when darkness fell on the return trip that Sunday night of 17 April 1949 when he saw or said he saw me in a front church pew, renewing my Christian faith before the congregation; it came as a flash like a lightning streak he said. That shared faith was surely a sign from God on my Sunday Birthday on Easter of 17 April 1949.

Post War Boom Times: 17 April 1949 to Easter of 1960

My new-born Christian beginning started and remained constant on my birthday and Easter Sunday of 1949 all that day long. And for a lot longer let me tell you. But I this time joined the Church of Christ instead of continuing going to the compromise religion of the Christian Church when we first married back in Commerce town. No compromises this time around, and now a total newness prevailed in my life glow with my sweetheart Miss Ella. I was no longer lit up like a Christmas tree by imbibing egg nog to my own content or complete satisfaction. The AA was my thing now or my bag so to speak for sure. My niece Loretta Mackey Cessna Rye came and stayed most of the day with her new husband on my birthday; we all turned over a new leaf of time that day I guess. He drove a new Pontiac automobile as a status symbol perk by the oil company for executives of his level in Humble Oil and would take years to graduate to the Cadillac status. Carl Rye loved country cooking vittles or soul food when describing vegetables and corn bread mixture (racial bigots don't want to eat country food or watermelon in public no more when putting on airs).

But on my birthday resolutions I was happy as a lark and ignored all the pitfalls of status symbols that don't let me enjoy yourself. I was just being myself for sure all that day. Everything became more enjoyable. Community life was definitely more rewarding. The neighbors's smiles seemed more frequent and much more genuine for sure. All the children were just as openly happy toward each family at the banquet tables in the yards surrounding my place. Only occasionally did we adults have to correct or scold a child for being bad but even then the parents did not pout and act abashed that something terrible had been done to their sweet child; good citizenship was the responsibility all adults felt essential to teach the children so correcting when something was adverse was only natural. Of course, big problems existed all over the place but none of the small stuff was allowed to be an issue or get out of hand. So we adults kept vigil on wayward spirited ones within the community. We kept an orderly lifestyle in harmony that way for it took discipline to enjoy all the freedom we knew. Even heaven above heard about my new leaf or new lease on life by starting a new order of things in society in general; the archangel Lucifer got word of my turning over a new leaf or lease on life and he left me alone let me tell you so that is why the AA program worked so fine and then all my family ills became blessings. The great World War number 2 was already won so the peace had to be kept with the continued blessings of the Army Ammunition Plant employing folks so my railroad job continued since the shipping was still regular. God was good to the old time religion of the Texarkana area. And then Hitler was supposedly dead but not buried or identified definitely with a mystery hanging over all our heads that he was still lurking about personally if not his spectre influence. Well, the women did return home from the arsenal to bring about the baby boom but soon afterwards returned to employment since one paycheck would not do their status symbol wants and thus the newborns became brats on occasion without correction from anyone since the parents were too tired from a hectic workaday with numerous problems enough there. Some kids ran wild and the homelife began to deteriorate noticeably. But otherwise than all that change nothing much else seemed of value or big concern so me and my loved ones were happy as if we had good sense.

But the community life was endangered again when the redlight district on downtown Third Street was finally raided and the young whores moved into a house across the street at 3319 Moore Drive; that house had also been a whorehouse during the war until we closed it down them; for a new house, that address seemed doomed to sleazy folks. Certain houses attract certain kinds of folks oddly enough. Such houses seem to have a life of their own; the men friends were traipsing in and out at all hours. And then today wrecker trucks pull up at all hours there and motorcycle riders at pee odd late times to get their dope. And the regular dope drop is obvious to all but the police who are on the dole to look the other way just as they let the madame in the local whorehouses operate on 3rd Street which soon reopened. Nothing bad can continued long without the police and everyone else knowing full well all the detailed matters of it all and thus had to be looking the other way if their palm gets crossed or greased well enough. The pushers are so nice seeming to your face, even have children of their own (the old timey bootleggers would not sell to minors; the

teenagers would be reported to their parents by the bootleggers themselves if ever trying to purchase booze so money was not everything back then after all back then before the generation gap became a big thing. That's why honor among thieves used to be a truism. But no more since dope is worse than alcoholic addition and thus changes forevermore the chemical structure of the brain to make macho thinking take over while alcohol just puts one to sleep usually while destroying a mere 100 brain cells of the over 111 billion cells crammed into that pointed head and then "wet brain syndrome" is the result from so much boozing that cognitive thinking seems like a slouching jug of liquid refreshments when the big-drinker does try to remember details of his exploits. I should know since I was always running wild with the roses bearing that alcoholic namebrand. So much for my vices that were such fun.

Fun for one person often becomes doom and gloom for another so that is why the legal courts have so much on the docket. Well, we had another nudist problem in the community or else it was the same Neely man doing his thing in public and not getting legally caught this time. Another man walked his Jay Bird self out to get seen by the ladies who were waiting for the bus (no polaroid cameras existed back then to capture the infractions like that thankgoodness). Anyway, the man drove away in a truck all muddy with caked dirt on the license plates so he was untraceable and that did not happen anymore or again for anyone to report. All of this happened near the house where the nudist Neely had lived so my wife could see the front walkway from our kitchen window when Miss Ella washed breakfast dishes. That peckerwood Neely bought a place out in the countryside to practice his nudism that certainly continued if rumor could be believed from the country folks I knew out there and then a fancy house built on a slab had a stockade fence in the rear and that was rented out as a club for businessmen to lie nude between lunch breaks so they could relax and be themselves or so went the excuse but nothing came of that lawlessness because prosperous businessmen indulged behind a fenced area. And of course the Neely Construction built that pleasure domed palace for nudism just 10 blocks over near State Line Avenue. You can bet that he was trying to get even with us prudes over in Sussex Downs. But we got him out of our hair for once and for all, even though his daughter was a good school friend of my son in high school.

The school system then had a row. The rich folks living across the Boulevard wanted to merge Spring Lake Park County School District into the city system, under the guise of doing away with the 10 grade school (but cheaper taxes was the real dictates of their pocketbook ways). Spring Lake School only went to the 10th grade so students had to transfer eventually anyway. But the school continued to exist as an elementary grade level after the merger. But all the community spirit died; no more annual carnivals with the grown-ups performing in Womanless Weddings; the cake walks ceased cold turkey for sure since the good cooks were considered too down-home or too hayseed for the up-town PTA folks from the fancy downtown area. The school district spirit died on the vine so to speak and so did all the funds raised for good civic duty causes for the Sussex Downs addition and that north of town area.

Community spirit in general declined about that time since a school is the lifeline of a people even without children. A Miss Harris, fresh out of college, got a job teaching at Spring Lake Park Schools and she drove voters to the schoolhouse polls with instructions to abolish the school district; her family had property that would benefit from the reduction of two school taxes immediately. Special interest is all that motivates the big wigs to take up a cause. Actually, air conditioning and television killed the human gatherings. And the school merger just buried the dead issue for sure. Folks now wanted to stay inside to keep cool so polio would not strike or develop as the lazy scalawags liked to say for making their own poor excuses of being trifling. Plus, that new fangled idiot TV box really put them into the couch potato position on all things that required an outside venture. TV ruined socializing for me and my tall tales. In fact, television has become the modern equivalent of the old Roman Bread Circus. Folks want violence and bloody shows to keep their attention span going. Only a few of us had opposition to the merger election. We always remained good friends so Kitty Dunn and her two daughters Freda and Beverly Barrett kept the good times rolling. Kitty Dunn was married to Tom Dunn, a son of Lorraine Dunn's mother who was chief cook at the Spring Lake Park School and Kitty's dead husband left her well-to-do so they bought a house next street of Rhosene and built a dormer room for the girls. Freda was pretty and a focal point for the boys to hang around all the time while Beverly was a straight A student and pretty enough.

Another fun neighbor was Angie Davis and her daughter Mary Frances. They moved to Chicago area where husband Ted was a native when he got cut-off the Flowers Holsum Bread route in town. Anyway, Angie nearly lived up at her house visiting all the time from just 3 doors down. Angie and my wife cleaned house together so they could finish it all and then visit while doing something constructive like crocheting or shelling peas; their hands were never idle. Even Jewel McGee was that way even though she was a secretary to notorious shyster attorney Brown. Jewel's house was immaculate like her whole life so she naturally adopted a son rather than go to the bother of having to birth one. We all ate outdoor birthday dinners together. Each brought a covered dish as an unspoken rule. Each made their own speciality so that it was like a picnic Sunday with the best goodies to eat. And then Mrs. McHeiney briefly lived in the whore-attracting-house and Jewel visited her often and was sitting on the ground helping weed a flowerbed when the Berry dog named Sergeant ran by and just lifted his leg to pee on Jewel while continuing to run on down the busy street, never getting run over. Mean dogs and bad kids never get hurt when doing any dangerous things because the devil is their watchman and instigator in it all so Satan keeps them safe to continue doing aggravating things. But the worst dog in the neighborhood was Hasso which was a dog owned by a World War II veteran down the street; he brought the German Shephard police dog from Germany at end of the way and let it roam loose so he would not have to clean up the shitty mess and too so the pest would eat what other animals had in their yards. Well, that dog came up dead one fine day when the other rednecks got tired of being abused; no one cared if that veteran had won the war singled handed or not as he often enough told; folks did not ever know who led to the demise of that vicious guarddog named Hasso but then folks will tell you anything and I should know that best of all. But old Serge dog got his justice one day in my yard at that.

That local big dog Serge on our block that survived around to become 34th street as well got too prissy for his own good when my kitty cat had 4 kittens on a small daybed or Hollywood couch we kept in the garage. Serge was a duke's mixture of dog-dom genes so he was justifiable a roving dog running through the greenish yards to do his business which means dog-dokies to your tube-boob generations folks. Well, that ornery dog lifted his leg and peed again all over Jewel's back when she was stooped to pick up something on our garage floor; he had it in for poor Jewel who was always clean as a whistle. You can thus see why laws have to be passed to keep pets on a leash or behind a fence all the time for they are terrible, both man and beast who thinks his dog is above doing bad things. Anyway, Serge got his just deserts when our mamma cat named Lady Beth jumped on his back from that couch and rode his frame home to his owner's boundary line. That Serge dog yelped all the way more in surprise than pain from his bleeding bare bare bronc ride. Serge never came back to do any his business in my yard after that. We all got a charge out of that, especially Jewel McGee.

Miss Ella just watched that ruckus with a smile. She was simply outside doing her yardwork in the flowerbeds. White folks were not supposed to lift a finger doing slave labor work or nigger work as the uppity whites bragged and sneered when seeing Miss Ella doing yard work and thus making them look like lazy slackerds or slouches they were. Status symbols had come to Sussex Downs with the lazy crowd moving in. We ignored the white-trash lazy-bones neighbors and so we planted a garden that raised over 80 percent of our vegetables with our home grown efforts. And our flower beds won us "yard of the month" time and again. We even drilled a water well so that our yard could have sodium free drinks. And being on the same water vein as the famed Spring Lake springs where explorer De Soto drank in 1543 according to the old historical marker plaque on the spring house. We planted pin oak seedlings that in 15 years grew into mighty trees, while other neighbors complained that planting an oak took too long to get a shade tree so they harped in derision for 25 years that it would take too long to wait for an oak to grow into shade worthiness so they never got to have a tree since they could only talk a bad-mouthing story while we did our cultivation anyway, irregardless of their grouching and thus wanting us to be as miserable as they were about not making decisions to plant an oak tree. And the bird nest and the chirping add to our joys when the birds sang out their hearts for us planting that tree for them. So we had a good time in our garden of Eden yard while it lasted. We only watched a few after-dark hour TV shows while our neighbors more

and more all the time. No use to waste time being inside during the wonderful hot summer time that God created for mankind to work. But most of our neighbors sat in chilly rooms watching a flimmering magic box. I will soon enough be in a box for eternity so why hurry inside to one now. Also, that chilly air-conditioning helps cause arthritis and other skin irritating ailments but you can't tell know-it-all redneck America anything until it is too late, meaning that it is obvious to all that their lifestyle is the root cause of the problems.

As more and more television sets appeared, the less folks sat on their front porches to watch the world go by and to chat or interact at all with anyone. All has made society less human interactioned and thus breeding fear of people in all by all segments of the population. My tall tale talking as a playtime thing soon ceased except on birthdays and family reunions that also withered to only a few of the oldtimers. No one wants to hear what a real person has to say, only the blaring TV with its violence has appear anymore. My talk became wasted time on deaf ears. The nation's number one mind warper did this to our wonderful country which once had a democracy based on discussion of ideas not the materialistic goods gained from advertisement on TV. One simple machine could pander to the worst aspects of human nature now so I soon found myself sitting and watching the mindless shows that belittle imagination and interpersonal human skills. And to think that subliminal use of that technology soon puts mind control into the game of life so mind over matter surely has become a reality on a mass level. But I still do not find a willing audience for my tall tales like now.

Some young folks want to hear about the olden days with a sense of humor thrown in like only I could do. That's when I strut my stuff when an audience applauds the likes of my tales, on a one to one basis for me. TV is so nice seeming till you get to know the awful results; the glitz will improve everything into oblivion. Only the human touch can keep enthusiasm alive enough to teach imagination to the young liars coming of age and that are yet to be born; need to teach through example for the skill not to be lost and imagination is what makes inventors get ideas to improve this old world. The future is being lost now by the TV set crowd in their chilly air-conditioned rooms unto themselves as a selfish lifestyle takes over.

No one wants to give me holler anymore unless to borrow something not to return. This makes me sound cynical but then TV does that; the TV is the tool of the devil who usta make everyone do bad things (and some holiness church preachers actually visit parishioners and then load the evil TV into the trunk of their car to sell the wickedness out of their souls). Not a bad scam if you can get away with it. But twin city Texarkana is full of all kinds of religions that work a mind boggling guilt trip on you like that if you are gullible for I would myself sell the TV if it were too wicked to stay in my house. All our friends were well-churched. And Mrs. Ted Windill visited us when in the neighborhood or on church visiting duty for her First Baptist downtown duties. She kept us up to date on all the latest happenings of what the mafia was doing to keep the town from growing fast like Shreveport, Louisiana which the two towns were about the same population as of my 49th birthday. But Texarkana was supposed to grow bigger because of being the gateway to the Southwest as proclaimed by the huge lighted sign that used thousands of lightbulbs on East 7th street at the underpass. What a sight to see, well worth the drive out to view it all. And this delight had gone on during the great depression but no more since the big thieves got control of the city council and need to sneak every penny for themselves not to glorify the town. The 7th Street was full of eateries and motels that brought in business before the Interstate killed the town. My friend Lee Davis owned restaurants all over the place; he was a good railroad man's friend to give a meal to down-and-out folks. He soon became worth tens of millions of dollars from investments at New Orleans port of entry. And then cancer got him but he would not go for treatment anywhere else but here because the local hospital stated Medical Center on the front sign so he believed it was same kind of medical center even in Houston so his niece Mrs. Kirkendahl worked in Houston and her husband was a research scientist there but none of them could convince Lee that Texarkana did not have everything in the world that existed elsewhere. Guess the whole world revolved around Texarkana by the way folks act and Christians here believe nothing bad can happen to good folks so they act with their way of thinking. If God wants you, all the medicine in the world will not help you was the philosophy but then who is it that speaks directly to God to know all the wisdom for life and death matters???

God always wants you when you die in Texarkana so it is considered evil to take any medicine or try to prolong life with cures when the mean-spirited gossipers get started on expounding their sadism trip on you. They reslly jeered at my home remedy to get relief from cinders spewed out from the coal burning steam engines (they said religiously that God was telling me to either quit that awful line of work or else to just grin and bear it like a good Christian). Anyway, the steam engines were a big hot item to view in my hayday going down the tracks whistling up business. But cinders flew in the eyes without a moment's notice so I used Vicks salve to lubricate the dickens out of them when I went home to rest all night for the next grueling workshift. And then the new diesel engines just exchanged one kind of obvious pollution for a less noticeable form of build up that kills in the long run. I miss the whistle and the bell of the old steam engine chugging down the railways night and day; they were a pretty sight to behold. May not be any worse or any better today either but change gets everything normal to disappear whether the young folks know that they will become old-foggies soon enough themselves.

Everything enjoyable is or usta to be evil and wicked such as smoking so only the sin-tax approach makes folks stop using them as the Puritans like to say but then I see no difference among the conservatives who still die of lung diseases from the smelly things; me included for sure. I can not stop smoking. The price of tobacco is high as cat's back for sure but will buy that poison regardless. Preachers usta stand up and condemn everything that us humans did; God was always gonna get you for sure around the next corner but now God is not looking over the shoulder of folks like he once did, to hear tale. Evil becomes goodness when an organized churchhouse condones it such as Bingo in a Church Recreational hall is considered legal tender windfall but sin is sin even though the Roman Catholic Church blesses those ill gotten dollars; a little holy water will wash away a lot of reprobate behavior they say. Well, reformed smokers are like born-again Christians with zeal who are out to reform the world right now even though Rome wasn't built in a day. An ex-smoker is worse than a smoke-stack smoker in a closed car on a rainy day; they harp while the puffer just exhales his venom on you. I stay clear of both zealots for sure and thus tend my own garden as the old saying goes, to avoid the prudes or priggish ones.

Building things became a big show on the Boulevard next to where Sussex Downs begins. A man named Duck built his own rock house and wore shorts in summer to show off his bird legs; he was a sight for sore eyes, being the first man in town to wear those funny shorts. Not the Bermuda shorts with long socks to the knees but he wore really shot under pants looking things and no shirt with his skinny bod that looked like skin laid over bare bones (most folks still thought that fat was beautiful as the Great Depression taught us that being hungry could kill you so we fattened up for the times that might return so we could live on the fat of the land for a spell before finally starving to death). Never got over being hungry all the time. I always wonder why God nearly let a whole nation nearly starve to death and I do mention that to the religious bigots who tell you what God thinks about everything and they reply smugly that the evil in those who went hungry was just a warning of their early punishment for what lay ahead eternally; that is enough to make one never believe in Christianity with sadists like that abounding in town. Well, the skinny Duck man had a helper who was a decent sized fellow with plump to fat legs like piano legs, no definition at all. Took nearly 10 years to complete that rock house since he picked up stones along his mail route to help out since he did buy most of the rocks; the Texarkana area is full of rocks, red color usually and then Hot Springs is near by for week-end trips. He had money to travel while the rest of us stayed home to watch TV late at night or to talk our tales.

The TV shows really enlarged one's knowledge. But mostly seemed vulgar when I first heart about hockey games; I thought it was a nasty business till the explanation of a puck with a stick being hit rather than a bodily function. I thought it was like going snipe hunting, just a nasty joke on someone not to be mentioned in polite society for sure. And that official game is weird and violent to watch so it should be highly successful on TV ratings for sure. Eating and smoking seems to be the spectator sport thing to do while watching any TV game. But I prefer to visit places and be active not like a stone on a couch or a potatoe couch as the TV ads say in defiance to what they actually portray as the lifestyle. Well, I visited old Kentucky again; kin all dying out but Aunt Minnie Tarrant Clayton Winniford is still

alive and kicking up dust for sure, irregardless of what Mamie Winniford Robertson wants to happen to her. When I visited once with Aunt Minnie in old Kentucky home of her son there, someone said that smoking cigarettes should be banned and the response was (don't say that here; people will march on you or walk all over you for this is tobacco or ciggy butt land and horse farm country for sure). I watched my P's and Q's since I was a smokestack with my pipe. And besides the coal mines made one of their farm houses and whole peach orchard cave in when the sink hole gave way one surprising day; ruined a really fine place that had no idea the old coal mines were all over that hilly place. Lucky to escape with their lives so naturally nothing legally was done to industry that ruined a beautiful scenic view and a rich dirt that could have grown food for many good souls (but this is what the Civil War was really fought over when the powers-that-be state that States Rights was the real issue which it truly was the moral question, not hateful slavery that clouded the issue which the Robber Barons used to their benefit; thus, States Rights meant that no company legality of rights would ever supercede individual human rights since folks are blood-and-guts with only a few years to live while corporations can exist for hundreds of years as the framers of the U.S. Constitution knew with the powerful Atlantic and Pacific Company and the Hudson Bay Company, all of which still exist to this day in London, England as money makers for the super rich; anyway, a company can treat an individual any way it pleases and then use court litigation for decades to avoid payment until well after a blood-and-guts individual is long dead so the big business vested interest perverted American government from 1865 onward. I know this from reading history so why is the big lie perpetrated????????

This big lie makes me angry and my anger extends to some ornery folks who can be so aggravating that I could go on about that all night. Money is all that really counts in Texas and Washington, D.C. so if you have a big wad of cash you can get away with bloody murder in America today since rich men's lies get covered up by the bought-off politicians and judges. I am just a common working jack so no one takes the blue collar opinion seriously.

My blue-and white collar daddy knew all levels of the good life but he died from a broken heart in March of 1950 at age 89; he had to move out to the country with my brother Dude who was really named Junior being born even on same birthday as my dad George Washington's birthdate. Daddy wanted to be 90 the worst of anyone since old prototype robber baron John D. Rockefeller, Sr. was reputed to be 90 and giving dimes to the children to make them love his cheating ways. My father always walked to town several times a day when living there on Jernigan Street with other brother Will but his wife Ida got rid of him after 19¹/₂ years of bother or so she said he just wanted to move out on Malloy Road with Dude so who knows. Daddy raised Will and Dude but none of us 3 younger ones when he ran away to work in the pioneer oil fields to build wooden oil derricks so Will had some reason to feel obligated to take care of him in his old age but the rest of us did pitch in to send money to pay extra expenses and certainly with the funeral we all split the bill equally. But my dad was always a busy and fiest old man living his retirement in genteel poverty; he was born in 1862 at the Confederate Hospital at Little Rock, Arkansas not in 1858 or 1859 as my nephews swear on their pulpit Bibles for my dad told many a tale about his mother's travail to get the body of her husband Madison Maxwell Montee Taylor back to Cherrywood Plantation homeplace in a barrel of pickle juice and daddy said many a time that he was born the very minute his father died and on the same iron bed. Well, my daddy fought the good fight of a long life, fraught with all his enemies of this life and demon rum or homebrew. But he lived life on his own terms, not to the tune of tiny or small minded dictates of all the good Chursitian people of the community who are really just Little-Hitlers wanting to boss you in the name of the greater good of everyone else. Daddy truly neglected his 5 children, me certainly as the baby born when he absconded permanently but he knew that his own blood brothers in Commerce would help us since family blood line was stronger than water. Besides, his mother as the richest widder-woman in Texas left a million dollars in gold coins to each of her children to hide Nimrod Taylor, Jr. from the law and that fortune was meant to finance the whole family as it did for decades so no flagrant neglect was imposed, only the social stigma of no father living in the house with my fussy mother who gave Daddy the silent treatment for being responsible for the death of aunt Jennie Sullivan Taylor. I don't condone daddy's leaving but

I do understand that he was way ahead of his time in doing his own selfish thing. Life is not fair to all and never has been if history lessons have a value so all the goodie-two-shoes in the world who think that God makes everything happen for a big-picture divine purpose are really just trying to fool themselves at the expense of the person or me they are trying to brain-wash for their devisive motives, plus free-will exists from day one of the world so don't make God a secret-service watchman with a monitor or proctor mentality to wrap everyone's knuckles with a stick if they do not obey life's whims according to their goodie-two-shoes attitudes or interpretation of life as they assume society must live. To thine ownself be true is the best advice everyone should take in life (all of this nervous tension from the church ladies philosophy is enough to give one spastic colon or irritable bowel syndrome gaseousness for a lifetime and that results in speeds-up peristalsis, which is excessive bowel movements and that in turn creates a GI or gastro-intestinal problem that can become life threatening just because buggy-bodies do not mind their own business, but the sadistic element of Christianity leadership had rather scare you to death than use loving kindness to change the world). One can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar but tell that to a hell-fire-damnation church crowd out to get revenge on some element of society. Well, I credit my dad for giving me the perfect D.N. A. to be able to learn anything well enough to be the best at it when I set my mind to it. I also attribute my brashness and drive to succeed in this mean old world to all the busy Taylor blood lines in my gene pool. All this respect and thoughtful concern is just a presage to the funeral for my daddy who die poor when he tried all his life to find a gold mine and even bought stock shares in many of the oil companies that he built wooden derricks for, yet all those efforts went bust or belly up so that made him a failure in the eyes of the citizenry or ritzy kin who use money as a score card for success when living a cavalier and exciting lifestyle has no value to those puffed-up blow-hards in society or rather high-society country clubs. "nyway, my dad was buried in an unmarked grave just as dear old Aunt Jennie Sullivan Taylor lays forever in an unmarked grave site somewhere up in wild Oklahoma Indian Territory where the family had to abandon her last remains during a blizzard and thus save themselves and the baby named Lissie Taylor Love eventually. Enough bad blood remembrances remained from that day until now to destroy all family love so animosity still reigns in sister or double-cousin Lissie Taylor Love's heart not to allow a tombstone to be placed in the Taylor plot in Rosemond Cemetery of Commerce above his grave so that he would have the same thing happen to him that resulted to Jennie. And that is the fact of the matter, good or bad for the good Christian and church going family members to do. Well, I went to my daddy's funeral with Lynna and Lucille Winniford; my Miss Ella was sick with laryngitis as was my little boy for once not a word could be said by those big talkers of mine. They stayed home to get well and not gad about to spread their diseased germs like folks do today with bad colds to infect the whole populace (seems folks selfishly want to infect others so that if one feels bad then the whole world should suffer the same fate). And many other seemingly health kin often die a week or so later after a funeral because of getting flu germs at a cold-weather time funeral; funerals are for the living so why make everyone make a socially graced appearance at the deceased services that can result in a major illness that kills more loved ones. Well, Death is really a good thing in the long run; it gets rid of the repro-bates like myself finally. Of course a lot of loved ones have to go join the good fight also. Just as marriage is the fatal plunge for all hard fighters in this life, so is the last good fight a time over-due for us all to experience. We must not dread our fated heritage as the legacy of all humankind to go to the grave when our time comes. I am always as ready as I ever will be when that subject comes up.

The subject of death is just a big part of life itself so why be squeamish or try to avoid it. Be realistic at all times. Thus, I usually walk all over the cemetery to see the last and final resting spot of long past friends and other kin or branch water kinfolks. That way a bitter-sweet visit results, to avoid thinking of the cemetery as a dreary place with all its epitaphs and fancy tombstones on display. I usually ramble all over the cemetery, to see who has died lately in case that I missed hearing about a friend's demise. Such ramblings keep a deep grief at bay.

My ramblings also returned me to East Texas after the debacle of the Great Depression with about the same bitter-sweet joy as going to a cemetery or funeral. But I soon got over my sadness of losing my dad by going fishing; I caught all the fish

in the world that I could snag. Or at least I tried my best to get them all. I do no fishing during the cold months or during hard rains, no need to catch my death of cold sniffles just to get out of the house and away from the sassy kids like most ornery married guys have to do to have peace and quiet. Not me; my word is law as long as I do not lay it down for anyone to hear. But no Little Mister kid of mine is going to rule the house with a sassy mouth when I pay the bills; "Well sheet my mouth if ever I have to eat my own words about keeping the peace and order at the same time." Kids are sweet and good to have around but not when they rule the roost like the modern youngins seem to do with the working mom away not to teach morals and manners. The youth culture is about to destroy this country of mine and yourin. Home life is a flemsy thing today and not much interaction of kids with their grandparents as a daily source of inspiration. Things ~~th~~ do change but not necessarily for the best or better. I did not know my dad till I was grown in 1930 and of course knew who he was and heard all kinds of things about him from uncles and cousins. My mother never said a bad word about daddy, only that he was a from a good family or else she would not have married him, to have sweet children equal to her good blood lines. Thus, no mother should bad mouth a father to a child who will eventually grow up to learn the truth and then hate the mother for having chased the dad away. I do love and appreciate my mother very much for her silent treatment of her lost love story. That way nothing said ever had to be taken back; she was wise beyond words for sure let me tell you.

Being wise seems not to be part of the way that fanatics in church act; they must speak their piece to cause discord often as possible, being the sadistic fiens that they are prone to be. Well, I changed churchhouse places of worship simply because of the way one Church elder did; he stole a fortune from the building fund at the Dudley Avenue Church of Christ. Wisely, the membership dedicated one Sunday collection plate funding to the savings for the new building. After five years, the sum should be adequate but none of it was there. New cars for all his family and big vacations and a room on his home went into that building fund. Yet, he came down to the front pew or Mourner's Bench and cried his eyes out before God and congregation saying he was sorry. Nary a penny was ever repayed since he was a God Fearing man and had learned his lesson so it took another five-year plan to save money for a new building. Where was God to stop the thieving of that Church elder since God is always popping into the everyday business life of folks; now, this is why free Will is my firm belief so don't be silly and say God is direction every moment of everyone's life; God is busy in the whole universe so the daily details get neglected so when regular church going folks steal no one wants to do anything to them but when someone the membership dislikes then blood in the eye for sure. That is not a true relationship with the Bible that is the only word for God's dictates. Anyway, we changed our membership to Walnut Street Church of Christ which was much closer to our home on the Texas side. We went to Dudley because it was on the way to the Cotton Belt Hospital on the Arkansas side. I never could look on the right side of the street at that churchhouse when going to the hospital for the next 20 years. I avoided that evil man who used religion and repentance of words rather than repaying the stolen sums; words are cheap and hallow when abused like that. He would have fit in very well indeed with my sister-in-law niece Elsie Taylor Winniford who got born-again so often that she should never mostl likely have died or else she was like a cat using up her 9 lives of going to all the church denominations for that was how feline she was. Brother Perry in Amarillo became the Methodist example of perfection that she talked about all the time, enough to make you despise him even though I never met the man. She never became a Presbyterian like most of the Taylor clan in Commerce and old Winnsboro had been. I resolved never to discuss politics and religion in the same breath. Separation of church and state means just that, not to use God as being a Republican the way the country club set does. I live my inner most felt religion as an example rather than expounding on how good I am or how Godly I am. The Publicans are more apt to talk themselves into heaven's door rather than do good deeds for words are cheap if you have money to drop in the plate loudly for all to hear that pledge as that is so re-publican of the show-up inside the churchhouse who think they own God by donating big and regular sums for show. I do not sound abroad my tithe meager as it is. But then I am not considered a good church worker since I do not lavish money and praises on the popular members.

Religion is being crammed down the throats of folks who want to build membership for a fine edifice so never attend an opulent building. When the stained glass goes up, the friendly goodness toward all wanes since money drives become the main object to keep the edifice in good repair plus to continue expanding the glory of the earthy name. Small churches are friendly and much more sincere so all the big and fine building experts of religion will say I am sinful but then the hurt dog always hollers the most and the loudest. God knows my intent is true and real so to hades with those who lambast me for being honest and truthful. God is in his heaven and all is alright, for most likely I am there in God's bosom by now. And I will extend you a handy welcome, irregardless of your opinions when you get there.

All this religion talk is enough to give me Spastic Colon again; gas on my stomach is enough to suffocate me alone so must not light a match for my pipe or will blow up the place right now. And that is what I would do if thieves broke into the house, just gas them to death and then light a match to blow up their schemes to steal me blind. Pardon my moment of truth. Truth is not always a pleasant thing but much preferred to lies.

Truth of the matter is that I speak what I remember since having a photographic memory. God gave me that gift to last a lifetime and the lazy louts criticize me for reasons of jealousy; they defame my ability when they do have a superior trait so that shows why I seldom socialize with the busybodies; I keep busy tending to my garden at home. My deep water well gives me all the unpolluted liquid to keep my plant life looking good, no floride to build-up the salt content of the soil and thus eventually ruin the growing ability of the soil. I knew this decades ago but only the media wants to take credit now for sharing that age-old fact. Anyway, the detractors of my greenery and award-winning yard claim that only sky-juice is the correct method to water and that God would judge when best to tend my garden needs so that my deep water well is a tool of the devil. Thus, see why I continue to avoid well-versed church goers like these when they allowed a thief of the building funds to "become better than God" for never repaying the money so some other church leaders got their fingers into the pie and did not confess since he took the whole sinful blame. Strange bedfellows indeed occupy this world realm. Anyway, I did not ever return to that hell-hole of a church, especially after the minister Oscar Smith of Houston left there; he was a good man but not the leadership. My sense of humor took me elsewhere in life; the last laugh is always the best.

Humor or a laugh can be the worst kind of abuse. This was proven by one of the new neighbors in Sussex Downs. Patty Thomas Moore and her husband Dick with a new baby girl Kay Lydia bought the house from jeweler Herman Tuck; his Parks Credit Jewelers was doing so well that he built a new brick house four blocks over and ten blocks down, near the Loop. In fact, he lived near Leila Lumpkin who sold her house on 27th where the bus service ended at dark for my part of town; her husband moved my household things when I bought my Moore Drive place; Lena was a Woodman of the World Insurance worker as was and is my sister Opal so that tie made fast friends of us all. Lena often dropped by to visit and keep us up on all the mafia gossip so we did not feel so remote out in the country as Sussex Downs was purported to be. We also had the largest swimming pool in the Southwest for a while; the Braumiller family owned and operated it on edge of their pasture to their dairy farm; they lived in a big Victorian house next to the Lutz home in Sussex Downs. My daughter Lynna E. was a good friend to the Lutz twins Bobbie and Barbara and Barbara now worked for the Cotton Belt in the office so I saw her nearly every day. Twins always took pictures of gatherings but not many pictures exist of me so that is as ugly as I get for sore eyes to see. So look for me when you see me coming to have my picture took, was a sardonic approach to that fiasco of mine to take a decent likeness; I wanted to look better than I was, not the fat silly way I do. So why suffer the humiliation when the negatives come back with the fatal results. Also, the twins were always friendly to us; afterall, I gave all 3 show money every week for years since their dad was a World War I vet flat of his back in bed for 30 years but they had a big enough government pension to live well and to buy a house on corner of Anthony Drive and 33rd or College Drive. But they did drive my wife out to see Mr. Beryl Anthony about buying this home so I am grateful and glad about that fact; and we got our dog Snoopy Ben from Lutzes when the Braumillers gave them 2 pups and only one was actually wanted by the twins. Their grandmother Mrs. Price turned 90 and she had tales about her kindship to Jesse James the Robin Hood outlaw badit since she was a

blood relative, her maiden name of James and her dad being a cousin. Mrs. Price was an octogenarian as my son liked to say. He used a new word every day and thus the whole household got to share all that learning. Grandmaw as we called her was a joy and lived a few months at a time with each of her children throughout Arkansas and deep Southland. But she stayed the winters with Mrs. Lutz because these new houses were tightly built and very warm (so tight that it nearly killed my son's health with inner ear infections caused by the pressure from not having air circulation easily, like living in a vacuum tube or thermos bottle). Anyway, everyone had to pass the Lutz place to walk to the swimming pool which had a drowning of a soldier so the requirement of a lifeguard was made and the rumor mill states that the Braumiller family closed the pool rather than hire a lifeguard that federal regulations mandated since the Southland hated the federal troops and such laws because of the federal occupation after the Civil War (old hurts and wounds die slowly with the conservative mind-set). But the pool was fed by natural cold springs that seeped up from the cracks of the huge pool and the 55 degree water was cold as iced down watermelons. My water well is on this water strata with a 55 degree water so I should know about the coldness. No locals died or drowned but the government regulations shut it down and it slowly decayed into an unsightly mess. Such a waste to see all the building droop the roof line full of holes and then for a wind in 20 years to blow it all down. High fences had to be built to keep curious youngsters out so I do not think expense was reason for not hiring a lifeguard. Or even the federal regulations. Something hidden or not announced to the public is the real reason since they loved money too much to kill the golden goose intentionally. Thus, that fun place named Crystal Springs Pool was shut down and only lawn parties existed for the local fun times during the long hot summers. We still saw the Lutz family often enough. She was friendly to wave when passing.

Once, Mrs. Lutz ran outside to greet my son when walking home at lunch time so she offered a noon meal to Robert boy which when finished was told the price was well worth twenty-five cents; a quarter he said he had not and left quickly. He never walked that route again and sneers to this day at their gall to take hundreds of show ticket money after they also ate free at our table but could not return the favor once in their long years of knowing us: "Do me wrong once, shame on you; but do me badly twice and shame on me" quoted my son about this dreadful day. The curse of a memory courses through his brain. Never again did he visit any of them. Mrs. Lutz continued acting friendly to greet us when walking by from the grocery store that Mr. Ramsey owned at 33rd and Boulevard. My son cut through and walked way north of the 33rd Street and avoided any more encounters. With friends like that then one does not need enemies often enough stated my son. He never forgot. Bobby would walk a mile extra to avoid that route. That made me tired thinking about it as I often commented. My tired is worn out from it all. So tired in fact that my hair hurts or aches me all over. And so tired my eye lashes droop. All that turn of events just floored me. And this just added to the reason that my son preferred to go visit the farm each weekend; he could literally get away from the hateful and grasping folks while getting his homework done on the train trip that took four hours one way. And also he got to keep in close touch with all the kin, some bad and some not so good. But that boy of mine learned first hand all about his blood kin with good reason to understand all the backbiting that happens in a fine but old family (as I keep saying over and over, being an orphan is best of all in this life). The farm though did provide a setting for contemplation for an intellect to grow in the peace and quiet. The granddaddy of all goats still lived at the farm, named Billy Goat Gruff; that was the progenitor of Shebagotah that we had to leave at Channelview; the one that got in the door-to-door dry cleaner salesman's Suburban truck and ate the clothes. Billy Goat Gruff ate rail fences for his jollies or to spite others. And he chases girls up a tree (treed them for hours since he did not like their perfume since odor was what usually made him charge things). But the worst disappointment of all was that little boy's dog named Boots got given away after all. That dog chased turkeys and chickens so his aunt Lynna gave the dog to a builder in Commerce who needed a guard dog for his supplies in his yard. I had to drive my son by to visit his boots pet often when we came to Commerce in his aunt Lynna's car of course. Oddly he did not resent his auntie for making the dog Boots go live elsewhere once the reason was fully explained. My boy was smart enough to know the truth so anyone who did him wrong was on a black list for evermore like poor old Mrs. Lutz.

Being on my son's bad side was not a horrible thing since he did not avenge himself on folks for he was too busy learning from books and also raising plants or going to the farm and working with animals to carry hatred to a violent conclusion. But the Lutz family was persona non grata for sure. It was a good thing that he had heard over and over the old timey tales about Jesse James from the old grandmother Price. He never saw them again for a social visit but was sugar sweet as pie when speaking to them in public. My son had learned how to play the social set game of putting on a socially acceptable face to get by in this mean old world.

The farm excursion kept my son out of meanness for sure since he did not run around with gangs to do meanness for the fun of it. A macho stance would have required doing something sneaky bad to those who insult your intelligence by suggesting that that meal was worth a quarter anywhere else so please pay up. Anyway, the farm chores are busy and hard working to make one tired by bedtime for sure. Well, the meanness of a wolfe pack kept problems simple enough. The roving wolves from the creeks were eating auntie Lynna out of house and home, killing turkeys by the dozen. A County Agent was hired to trap wolves; that was his only job. He trapped hundreds and hung the carcasses on the fence posts that bordered his own farm on the Sulphur Springs Highway. The stench was so bad for 10 miles either way that one nearly keeled over from the odor alone. And that went on for years. The County Agent proved that he was earning his salary and it was money well spent since turkey raisers by the hundreds lived in rural East Texas. But come 1960 and the wolves won when the old man agent retired for good. No one else wanted the job and then the do gooders won the day with declaring that the wolfe is good to have around. Wolves ran the length of Turkey Creek from deep East Texas all the way to far western Texas so the spread of lice and ticks was terrible. Wolves only kill each time enough to feed the big pack of 30 or 30 in the mid summertime. But the worst of all predators was the foxes. Local hunters with their dogs to run kept a fox in a pin to turn loose late at night for the baying dogs to chase. And then more and more foxes or vixen got away to breed. The wild foxes are more like a kitty cat; the feline nature likes to make a game of killing things. So, the fox will kill many dozens of turkeys and pile them into a heap uneaten and then leave the massacre to go kill something else. Miss Lynna got a Sherphard dog to smell out foxes; then a Collie dog named Jackie for the old time Jackie dog did a good job but the dog missed my son when he was gone during the week that the dog would eat the boards off the flooring of the long 30 foot long porches on the homeplace. That Collie literally nearly ate us out of house and home. But he finally ran off when no menfolks were on the place one week. Never to be seen again that dog stayed gone for sure. The pouting nature of that Collie dog was as strange as any human with hurt feelings on his sleeves or paws. Never can tell about living things.

Living things are strange at best. Just as the trend to having small families is typical today and not a good thing either. Large families with 3 or 4 sisters and 3 or 4 brothers made an individual learn early in life how to get along with folks and also taught one how to fend for self in a crowd of loved ones of course. But today, the family of only 2 means that little give-and-take exists so that means that no compromise will exist in our society or government-due-process system one of these days; too many "Little Hitlers" will exist; each thinking that their way is the only way in this world. Everyone needs several sisters and several brothers to grow up around in order to learn basic techniques of how to live successfully with one another in this over populated world so this United States of America will reap what it is sowing by having small family units that now hardly know personally the grandparents or the family heritage of the surname they bear. Interpersonal aspects are dying fast in this one great land of ours. I see it all too clearly as I am running my mouthy ideas hogshod over you like when I would run beside a truck just for the exercise to prove I hadn't lost my touch to go fast on my own power; so my tongue can run sixty-miles an hour if need be or desire to do so hits me. I am whimsical that way when telling my tales to you. Excuse me if I bore you with all my rattling along like an empty wagon on a dirt road going to market what I have not loaded up myself. Excuse me if I burp or belch too much since gas on my spastic colon gets the internal juices flowing; I can burp constant enough to keep a car going but in a jerking manner sometimes as I did during the great depression, always going till we ran out of gasoline money. Stomach gas never gave out though. I can run my mouth long enough to conjure up the gastric juices for a good ride.

My constant ride through life is to talk myself to death so that way I will die happy enough. Just don't let me talk you to death with the doredom getting you down. My old Unk Scotty appeared again on my front door stoop. He wanted to see Sarah Bernhart one more time before she really did retire or so he said. Can't miss what you never had is hogwash he said so he was ready to go until he learned she had long since been dead not just retired from showbiz but retired from this life. I knew that he truly came to imbue my son with the wonderlust that he gave me early in my life when he came from the old country and stayed to claim the good life for his own. I was not about to let him walk my son to the four corners of Texas just for his pleasure. I could show my boy all that he needed to know since a new world of wonder was on the brink in this great country of Texas. I just steered clear of my dear old Unk Scotty who still resided in the Big Thicket forestlands and was only on a visit up to Texarkana to see the sights and to see if my half grown son would traverse the road of life with him. Not to my liking would my boy do what I did in early life. I know the pitfalls for sure. Life ain't what it is cracked up to be by those who try to sell a bill of goods to come have fun with them on a trip or whatever the enticement so I take charge of diverting the fun-time promises.

But my kids got too big to play Hawkshaw on the passenger train anymore; they grow up so fast that one wonders where the time has gone; they step on your toes as little tykes and then step on your heart strings as grown-ups. No one pays for his or her raising till they have a child of their own to raise, especially a child just like them to contend with so that they will get back exactly what they dished out but with interest. I should know. All the hippies and this baby boomer generation surely needs to get their due and general come-uppence with interest. Usually ten times worse is what happens but nowadays few have more than 2 so the odds are not good that true repentance will come from a blood-issue child. It is all over but the shouting for my misspent youth being long over and not having to see same regrets in my children. But time will tell. Anyway, my old Unk Scotty came to my house to entice my son on a rambling trek of the world but my boy is a book worn and does not need adventure from a dangerous voyage with a sojourner and besides the wide-open spaces are being given to him at the farm place that the roams during the summer vacations. He has it good and knows it for now at least. We take long train rides on vacations to see the world so we aren't backwoodsey hicks completely. We see things that we never forget. That's a Taylor waspy trait for sure; we look and then speak; good manners require that courtesy for whoever makes the fewest people feel uncomfortable in a sticky situation is the best bred in the group. And that also why so many WASP sayings or "White People's witticisms" are as numerous as they are, such as stating that I met two girls known to have round heels, meaning loose women or whorers. Reason for not calling them sluts openly is to save face, mainly theirs in polite society. But good manners are fast disappearing these days.

Bad manners are enough to put your nose out of joint or get all bent out of shape with having to go places and put up with that crap, especially to pay to see a movie and then primarily hear all the viewers talk about their interpretations or worse yet their personal gossip that has no point to the movie scenario; makes me angry enough to beat the daylights out of them. And I am tickled to death when the talkers suddenly do not know what the movie means. That kind of justice makes me have a ripsnorting good time at their expense. Enough about what is ailing me or what's eating me as a pet peeve. Life is too short to sweat the small stuff.

I always promise more than I can deliver so that keeps 'em guessing at to what will actually happen in life. Anymore of my sayings would be too much of a good thing in one day so I travel about as an alternate. As I always told my kids, I own Caddo Lake in deep East Texas; my dad left it to me after his own maw died to leave it all to him; she dug a hole that formed it, you know, when actually intending to dig to China to meet the Emperor there. You either believe me or you don't. But never mind thinking that I am a crazy liar; I ain't insane enough to have good sense in this life as my kin always said of me: "He doesn't have all his marbles and if he did would take them out and play with them all the time." That is the truth too.

I am hungry for all those old timey folks talking around wood-burning stoves and telling jokes, to laugh like nobody does anymore in America. I am very hungry for that and the old time country cooking; my stomach thinks my throat has been cut; that is how starved I am for all that old time stuff.

I stay hungry for things to learn or just foodstuffs to eat; that is why that I am so fat, to hear tell from my loved ones talking about us fatties. Got to have something to chew the fat over, for sure. Nothing goes unsaid in my family, all the bad and the good and the ugly for sure. And kids are the worst to speak their mind when they get old enough to know how to say mean things in a sweet sounding way (I coined an oxymoron alas, to show that I got some book learning once ever so briefly but more about that later when I feel like showing off with my educated airs as do most of the college educated crowd these days). I took first prize at school once, but they made me put it back so therefore don't expect too much from me in the highly edified department of the educated world. Anyway, kids are going to take over the world sooner or later, for they will surely grow-up to become like us: no better usually even though they are quick to say they do things better than the old folks for they are the hope of the future if anything is to get better ever; but actually kids are the hope for the future to become better but it does not when the young become conservatives in their youth nothing for sure will change so the same old seventy-six happens over and over; the status quo is never any good as I learned young and still know as a verity for sure since the big-rich get a method to usurp the poor and keep doing it until rebellion occurs all over this land like more than an election such as looting with Jesse James's era and the Great Depression riots and riotous marching on Capitol Hill Washington, D.C. Kids are all that we got in this world to look forward to their having a better life than we parents have. I sure am one of those doting daddies for sure. I keep hoping and looking for signs of a sure change but nothing on the horizon yet in my back yard. Thus, I keep tending my own garden by the side of the road of life hoping for the best to come my way. Hope or figments of my brain keep me going when times get tough. That is the well-spring of my life or source of refuge when the bad times nearly get me down; thus, I can keep going for the sake of my children. God gives us that kind of hope as refuge from all the meanness that we have to endure (but sometimes I think it is a better thing to do by not having children who will grow-up to have to endure the same hardships that I and all our ancestors had to brave to bring the good-stock of our blood-issue to this suffering point of endeavor). Yet I have kids to keep me company during misery. And that is a comfort beyond belief that I ever thought possible as a young whipper-snapper out to have a good time at the expense of others (but I was never foot loose and fancy free for I had a mother to support or help keep looking fancy and then I was determined to be responsible, better than what my dad did, so that the snippy gossipers would not be able to broadcast that I was a chip off the old block). I just had to be better than myself wanted to be, to prove the harpies wrong.

Wrong reasons to do good things can indeed be a motivating force as was with me. Life is hard enough to live it day by day than to try and be perfect to please someone else all the time. I should know since all my kin in Commerce and around Winnsboro wanted to live every minute of my life to fit their dictates; the "Little Hitler" types are very active and powerful in this democracy of America; they only want freedom to do things their way, not for others to have free-will at all. I have to insult their intelligence often enough for them to let me alone. But I still do my own thing, do it my way for a change when around kinfolks. Out of evil comes good sometimes so that means goodness is a part of evil; well then I will take whatever goodness that comes my way has to offer when encountering that brand of human behavior. Don't lecture me on ethics unless you have never done anything sleazy or wrong. Just discuss the aspects of the possibilities of being good if you never do anything of which you are ashamed, unless you are without sin then do not cast stones at me. But then the hit-dog always hollers the loudest since they recognize the reprobate characteristics in others that they themselves privately hold to; it takes one to know one is the old adage or truism as well I should know. I have done it all, done it all for the right reasons and for the wrong reasons but got it done nevertheless. Life is just like that, full of surprises and odd twists that ironacilly work out fine if you are pure of heart or have a goodly wife my sweetheart Miss Ella. All is not bad, even Satan was once the archangel or right-handed assistant to God so do not bad mouth the scheme of things unless knowing the "big picture" first. But I am always in the middle of things and the centerfold of the big-picture of life around my part of the world anyway. Thus, talebearers see me first and have a field-day on picking my bones to pieces. I am fodder for their gristmill so thusly I serve a good purpose for their evil ways when they get to bad mouthing folks.

My nervous stomach gets all windy bellied when upset as the hapie kinfolks planned all along to do to get back for old grudges. Anyway, I am still fraught with all my enemies of a lifetime but no longer demon rum at least. Only the bromides of all my clichés still keep me perturbed or disarranged when the good Christian professing kinfolks use kindness to get even for long ago grudges, but enough already on that old saw-tooth biting observation. The dictum of my kin never leave anything unsaid for long; that is their maxim or proverb of constant good usage. Yet all my ramblings are more of a scholium precept or a corollary text on the subject of being honest at whatever the human error cost. That's the epitaph of my life for sure. I live by slogans or theurms, especially these that are real chestnut of human virtue, for the road to hell is paved with good intentions along this athwart highway to hades. The road of life leads to the same places, whatever the era all the way back to the Garden of Eden in 4004 B.C. when our ancestors got all thrown out by the All-mighty Lord Himself for an infraction of eating too much of a good thing. Human kind is doing the same today, only faster with radio and the TV boob tube set going or blaring full blast. My conclusions lead to all the old familiar places in hard reasoning or top of the head thinking on subjects that just seem sententious, to go around in circles when luck all the time determines what is the outcome. At least my conscience gets over-active work when I do things as it is before my kinfolks then do a number on me since they all know my business much better than I do, to hear tell from their flabby lips so if they are so smart then why aren'tt they the richest folks in the history of the world??????? Don't talk to me about your epigrams or platitudes of life to law down the law or axioms like you are perfect or "better than God" with an insight bordering on the superhuman or supernatural for you a mere mortal as am I, to coin a phrase in opposition to the aphorism of the protasis given as gospel to me when I was being above-board and just being myself as the real McCoy to give an honest answer to the question of life that often gets posed to me but boomerangs on me when my advice is not what they wanted to hear, a real apodosis for sure. All my gibberish here is idle thoughts about all that goes wrong with my well laid plans of my mousey life. But I did do one thing right and I also got my money's worth at that when I sent my son to college at Commerce where he stayed at the farm with his grandmother and Aunt Lynna.

Anyway, he took real good class notes and bought all his textbooks to keep since he planned himself to be a teacher so he on weekends and holidays practiced all his new learning on us, his parents who quit school in the 8th grade when the 10th was the graduation level at that. Well, I learned more than I thought that my head could hold or ~~ourta~~ have to contain for long. Had to buy a set of encyclopedias to do the homework that was assigned; then had to purchase an unabridged dictionary which was a Funk & Wagnalls set at that. Even a Websters Dictionary was not enough as different lexicons have slightly different definitions and etymology (yes, the lexical meaning of a word versus the jargon or vernacular usage would not do since I was getting the hang of being edified or "edduicated" as one with highfaluting airs would say but then I was becoming too elegant for myself to associate with and that would not do since I was too down to earth to know any better as it was nearly impossible to teach a salty old dog like me new tricks). Anyhow, a lexicographer was one who put the dictionary together in the first place so the lecture notes included that 1700's era Doctor Johnson who defined words about like myself would do if I had been given the opportunity to be the first person putting out a defined book of all the words in the English language at that time. Dr. Sam Johnson defined oats as a grain fed to horses in England but eaten by the people of Scotland since he did not like Scottish people. Prejudice seemed an alright thing to do in defining words back then before scholars with airs took charge of the dictionary business. I learned much more than I wanted to learn but then once getting into the swing of things I was not one to stop with a job half done. My photographic memory learned all the info of the encyclopedia and I could quote facts like a TV screen movie of the week going full blast and could cite line number on the page if need be. I was proud of myself. My wife was learning too and amazed ourselves at how well we liked all that idle time spent on memorizing esoteric trivia as unrelated factual text was called. We could not get enough of all that learning which was called "Art for art's sake" by the ironic-irony term when learning was a joy and not intended as a direct tool to earn money since my buddies at the railroad yards thought education was to earn dollars in cash immediately but I informed them that was a vocational school's pur-

pose not the aim of a liberal arts degree. Arts as a term seemed to make everyone outside of the land of academia think that oil painting was the aim and all knew that artists never made money in their lifetime or got famous till they died. So, that was about right for being a school teacher, with low pay and not much respect from the public so why did one take years of college courses to earn forty-percent less than a policeman or a fireman or a garbage pick-up man. Seems that something called "art for art's sake" really applied to those passionate few who enjoyed learning and knowing things that few others would ever appreciate. Seemed elitist to me for sure. Or a genteel poverty lifestyle full of Old South aristocracy ideals in our contemporary world. You would think that highly educated folks over a long period of time would have figured out a way to make a fortune from their monopoly of controlling the educational machinery or machinations of this country. But the really intelligent are poorly paid and little respected consequently while dumb brawn gets a guy to become president of a major corporation that pays him millions for being a member of the right club, yet not really a bright mind in a highly educated field. The smart-money is never on the prospects of the degreed genius so America really does not like or at least does not trust educated folks. Usually, the Ivy League colleges are the main sources for their graduates to get good paying jobs out of the field of education of course if the guys are sure to pledge the right fraternity. Who you know is more important than a grade point average or hard work. This brazen or flagrant disregard for educational expertise honestly being rewarded will lead to our financial destruction. But I am just one of the poorly "educated" boys in this dumb world of thankless rewards. And awards are the cheap fodder for rewarding the scholar with hollow sounding accolades rather than cash funds. I am still amazed that the educated intelligensia has allowed this servitude to exist for decades dating back to 1800 even. My, my; oh indeed how my long distance or indirect college education is showing; I must be learning to think for myself rather than to let the status quo dictate their conservative thinking on my mind-set. I must really be getting something real out of those books. Book learning has little premium in society so I keep my mouth shut or else some will think that I am showing off. And Lord knows that I have no real intellect to show off. I just now have some thoughts to rattle around inside my brain so that I am not like an empty wagon on a brick paved road. I got some thoughts to carry as my own private self enjoys. I know better about a lot of subjects now when the politicians and religionists start to tell me how to vote or to think so I can do my own decision making for a change. But I always read a lot of newspapers and listened to the radio to get my voting info. I suspect the status quo as being corrupt because leadership of any organization has figured out an angle to make them money or else they would not remain there so long. Money is the real God of America and always has been since I learned that lesson well about that Civil War issue of States' Rights being over a corporation gaining more legal status or power than a real live individual has. The constitution states human rights, not corporate or business rights but tell that to the Robber Baron party of Republican politics that are partisan for their country club set, not for the general public. Those wealthy robbers clouded the issue with a smoke screen of evil slavery while sneaking the power away from the blood-and-guts folks whose educational level was too low to know what happened. Always be wary of the rich man who does or says he knows what is good for the average person who labors with the sweat of his brow because the rich do not work up a sweat to make millions. So much for my soap box largess at this moment. But you get the drift, I am sure.

My college education by proxy so to speak was enjoyable on both the undergraduate and graduate levels; I did not do the library research but just learning all the scribbled class notes and reading the class textbooks was quite an education for a dumb old boy like me and my wife did well too. We learned more than we ever thought possible to know in this old world. Thus, we surely did get our money's worth in sending our son to college. Everyone should try it that way. My son finally got 3 college degrees. We felt pride for all our efforts. But we soon learned about a lot of drawbacks to our kind of learning that got denigrated by the country club set when my son got married but yet those Republicans love that Abe Lincoln educated himself but anyone else who does that is pretension and a time-waster for not just going on to a good ivy-league college. Man, the rich like to put down poor folks at every opportunity. But that's wealthy folks for you; they got to feel good by demeaning the less fortunate as being that way because of being lazy or stupid.

Only the rich are intelligent to hear them tell it and of course God rewards with finances if they are pure of heart but the facts of history tell otherwise. And that is why only certain colleges are considered worthwhile for the scions of well-to-do families to send them to continue the myth of their class struggle. I like knowing all this factual detail even though nothing will ever change. Guess that I like having been exposed to a General Education or Liberal Education after all. So much for getting edified or "edduicated." Community life in Sussex Downs kept on changing with new residents when the Bullards sold their house next to the whore-house where the Murrays bought and then sweet Mrs. Murray went crazy when left alone so her daughters had to stay there or take her home with them. The Bullards were in oil field business so they knew a lot of her friends and kin, and the Bullards knew the character Faye Ingram Cooper of Cumby, Texas. They all drank together from brown bags since it was illegal to purchase alcohol except in Dallas or up in Oklahoma, from moonshiners. The Bullards sold to the Howards who had 5 girls but they soon moved. In moved, Raynelle Davis. Raynelle had a girl's name like Berniece Ward of Cumby branchwater kin. Well anyway, Raynelle's mother Alma Tate Davis visited him a lot and then Mrs. Lutz would drop in, seems that they were first cousins; their mothers were sisters and thus a James kinship to Jesse James. We heard more of the same Jesse James stories and then new ones. I kept them in stitches with the funny things from my youth and from the diary that uncle Charley Butler wrote about his witnessing a train robbery in Muscle Shoals in Alabama as a youth and then meeting the elderly Jesse James in Commerce, Texas in 1930's. Well, I knew a lot myself, about their notorious family relative.

Then, Gam Swore Ice came to live with Raynelle and Dorothy Davis when their twins got sickly; Gam's mother had just died from Alzheimer's Disease as it was commonly called 25 years later but unknown illness then that caused weird mental conditions. Gam feared that her fate lay in that same direction and it did. But Gam kept a fine yard and clothed one twin. Gam kept the children clean; did not want them to be potty-filthy dirty clothes in town. They looked like a band box stepping out to go to town all the time. Gam and us all drank coffee most morning for a break from the yard work. But my sweetheart wife Ella did not as she got drunk as an English Lord if she sniffed any coffee, and weak legged as a disrag on the clothesline. Ella drank a Dr. Pepper or a glass of orange juice. We had an extended family circle life with all the neighbors. We did not see our daughter often since she was still mad at her mother for all that spreading of elopement.

And then my sweetheart wife did another silly thing for sure. She took money from our son's wallet when he was busy and did not tell him so he hurried inside to go to the movie uptown and walked to arrive with no money to buy his ticket; he was so angry that he did not speak for a month to his mother for doing that and not telling him as she did replace the money when she got our paycheck. My wife feels that are children are chattel or family-slaves to be used as she pleases; he thereafter hid his money in weird but safe places when the excess funds were around; he mowed lawns and delivered newspapers to earn cash that he saved and always had a hefty sum available. But never again in his wallet was more than a dollar left as he could not trust his Christian mother to observe his privacy; she was always too busy ironing and washing our clothes to tell us every little thing she did so that really turned the guilt trip onto us for being angry when she could do no wrong. No wonder my daughter was eager to getaway from home and to doodle-bug all over the United States far from having to be a family slave. My wife still volunteered my son's labor when she thought someone needed something done; he thus hates Texarkana and the way prosperous folks take advantage of free volunteered services when they tell a tale of woe to make his Christian mother feel sorry for them and thus donate her son's time for their selfish needs of running errands and mowing their big yard for free. My son laid down the law and told his mother to stop abusing him with her smothering love that was worse than anything done in hades by Satan. No good deed goes unpunished as my son informed us all so leave him out of being volunteered. He was his own person and intended to make his own decisions or else! He was glad to go off to college.

But life continued the same for most of us in the community. I dug a deep well of 43 feet with 55 degree water to water my yard when the city lake turned over as the officials states happens to make the water taste like mud and also rationing was done that very dry year of 1955. Just walking in the water during summer time

could give one a severe bad cold like walking in icy snow. The cheapskates asked to run a hose across the street for free water on their lawn and for their indoor usage. I balked at that since electricity to run the pump was considerable enough. Those cheapskates rode a free horse to death with my son's volunteered services to run errands and to mow their grass when they brazenly asked for him to pay their way to a movie since they could not have money both for a trip via bus to New Orleans too. He had become their slave for sure. I could hardly look them in the face when they grinned their O'possum smiles of having put one over on us. Taking advantage of a growing child is one lousy thing but believing that using Christian charity unlimited by saying they were too poor to pay to have their yards done when then going to sin-city New Orleans for the Madis Gras season for their Christian fun, no less they expect me to believe; hie thee to a gas chamber or some such place for the wicked to languish for eternity. But life is kitschy blends of pseudo Christians posing to use Christian charity to their selfish whims. We soon never spoke to those usurpers of goodness never again. We wuz just too busy to give them the time of day, much less any more of our hard labor. No more freebies for the grasping and grafting neighbors. That's why clannish folks develop in all communities, to avoid the hateful hurts in life done in the name of Goodness such as smiling to our faces while abusing our generosity and then laughing behind our backs. Why, Danny D'asto was just one more such user or abuser; he was a big-shot safety inspector at the arsenal or Plant yet he used rickety ladders to paint his own house, but the art of using was refined by him since he only came to visit to borrow or to ask a personal favor for us to physically help him lift something heavy in his garage. We learned to go the other way when seeing him coming.

But the biggest jolt of all from godly acting neighbors came when a hail storm destroyed my roof and theirs of course. But I walked around the house to measure the roofing squares and the hoity-toity Mary Collyer Gowanlock observed my antics as she called them. All her brood of youngins came to see what I was doing; they quickly expressed derision that my mere walking around the house could result in a true measurement; they laughed saying that my ignorant Protestant education made me do that stupid stuff while their superior Roman Catholic private schooling now confirmed why they refused to attend the ignorant masses's tangled mess of stupidity. Well, I told them off with my Free-masonry superiority that was the real reason that the whole Reformation had to begin in the first place back in 1519. Well, I told them if they were so smart then why were they not richest in the world. And I added that no left over shingles would result from my figuring of the roofing squares. Well, their Roman Catholic buddy figured three-fourths of a square too much with his parochial schooling superiority while I had not one single square piece too much so my hayseed figuring was inferior; well, the medieval mind still is among us to this day with the mendacity that has to get said by those narrow minded but dogmatic folks who want to run the world according to their ideas even when they are wrong. But that is the provincial way of the Roman Catholics for I could be a communist or an athiest easier than one of them; the evil history of their church acquiring lands and monetary indulgencies to build cathoderials is enough to disgust a thinking person for sure. And then cutting legs off Indians who resisted the stealing of the American frontier is quite another after conquering them but then the medieval mind has to inflict deep and lasting punishing pain as a consequence of having the nerve to resist a Roman Catholic; I am glad that the United States is not yet a majority religion by the Catholics for then all hell will pass over the land or the head of anyone is barely disagrees with any statement of a Roman Catholic. You can see that I know evil when I see it; I am recognize badness when it comes calling.

But we had to pass and re-pass with that haughty and hateful family for decades. Tex Sellars lived between those mean sisters who delighted to saying cruel things to Tex on the way to their car for an early mass. Being nice to one's neighbors was not part of their religious scriptures since they used the Vulgate Bible and not the King James Version of the Bible, which they said was a bastard word of God and not to be taken seriously by well-educated folks like them. Their children liked to tell my son that he was too poorly educated to do anything important in life or to know the difference. That was the type of casual remarks that lurked from their lips during the years so no love was lost at any time. We allowed them to speak first so that they could never say we started the fracas; they also only came around when the need to say something hateful struck them.

Protestants and Roman Catholics do not mix very well at any function usually. And my Commerce friend Katie Liston was the exception; she was a girl about ten years my junior and always said that she had a crush on me from afar but she married Jimmy Sangalli of Texarkana; he was a railroad man too but helped out his brothers who owned a body and paint shop in town; he watched the cash register during the night shift; they operated 24-hours most of the time for decades. Katie gave up her Baptist affiliation to become a practicing Catholic, right down to eating fish on Friday. Now, that is a hard thing to swallow, eating fish as a religious configuration. When I catch my quota, I never devour them on a Friday just to prove that I ain't no papist for sure. I am a true-believer non-denominational Church of Christ, allows free-will to rule my life, not no head hierachy to rule church life decisions by telling me what books to read or not to read. Rivalry for my soul is between God and Satan not a Papist and protestantism. Dissention of the Baptist Convention elected president head always arranges a TV religious program at same time when the Catholics have a mass or special program so the conflict continues as causing strife for sure. Tis more than a dispute, this discord over a hierachy to rule church life when the Bible shows the one-true way for any literate person to worship and thus avoid altercation with preachers or priests who have a career ladder to climb up the beasucratic way. They can go to blazes far as I am concerned. Will be a banner event or a red-letter-day when religions all merge as one with no head appointed to tell folks how to think and act in order to be godly, for the Bible states clearly that only one church exists. But Katie Liston Sangalli is not haughty like the Gowanlock Catholics. Katie works her fingers to the bone so to speak in the ladies auxiliary of the Railroad Trainmen organization. She still laugh about having a crush on me and to think that I usta to run a country mile to keep from hearing all that mushy stuff from her moony eyes but now I like to hear all that mushy stuff, for I am getting old and uglier with no appeal so any memory of my hayday is fine to hear, now that I am past eighty years old. Katie is a good moral person but she does not discuss religion with anyone, just to avoid a big argument I am sure. Katie knows all the gossip on everyone so the gossipers do leave her alone in fear of what she would tell on them. The world seems a small place indeed when everyone you know stays near at hand in your life to keep telling and re-telling everything they know good or bad about you. God must have a great sense of humor since he made so many different kinds of folks who treat each other ugly in the name of the Lord and that is proof that God does not interfere in the daily affairs of folks or else no one would be alive on earth to continue the race for it all for sure. Jehovah has a little streak of vengeance since he makes bad things you do come home to roost so to speak; what goes around comes back around for sure. God is a boomrang sense of ironic justice for meanness to get returned ten fold. And death can be a wonderful release from life's burden of reaping what you sew for years and years; would be terrible to live for thousands of years on earth with all the harangue of your cousins and enmity in general from folks; one would have to wonder the whole earth to escape the local wags for sure.

Wonderlust has always been the way to escape the humdrum lifestyle. My old Daddy was always one to practice that philosophy; he even rode the rails when he was well into his 80's, unlike me who never goes anywhere in my old age. The railroad conductors knew him well by sight and that 3 of his sons worked for the Cotton Belt so they let him ride free from Commerce to Dallas without any pass and to Texarkana or onward on the Cotton Belt line just to get him out of the house away from daughter-in-laws harangue and then also for him to enjoy the scenery. Daddy rode his heart out; his middle name was go and the G stood for going as he often laughed. My dad knew all the old time conductors since they were boys so they let him indulge his traveling spirit and they all knew his poor financial condition; conductors then had to keep working till they turned 80 because not enough social security and retirement had not been paid into long enough to finance a living wage on retirement. Thus, all the able-bodied old timers worked till they dropped dead on the job and yet most of them lived to be well into 80. Old folks usta to be just wrinkled looking but very active physically, none of this stooped and weak stuff you see so much today among old people. I don't intend to act old so must keep busy on the go to stay a step ahead of death and old age for sure. Or else preserve yourself with some kind of exilir, such as my dad drank a p int of Scotch a day when he could get it and he hung out at the pool hall or the old domino hall all day long when he was

Taylor 148/148

in Commerce, not on the rails traveling away from snippy folks. He also hung out at the barber shop that Dewey Chapman owned and operated; bootlegged booze could be bought or arranged through that place. Also, Dad brought booze back when he rode the rails since Commerce town stayed dry longer than most places. Goodie-two-shoes acting folks act better than themselves when professing being a teetotaler while actually buying the stuff on the sly to smuggled home for a dram in their coffee or whatever is their poison to imbibe or enjoy in private for their skin and puffed eyes tell-off on them for sure. I should know, being an ex-about everything bad in life.

Sneaking around though soon gets revealed by the gossips when one of them gets angry at you or jealous when you buy one more nice and new thing that they do not yet possess. I should know. Enough to make you want to die when they gang up on you. But death is one thing not to be dreaded. Just the sorrow shown in public at a funeral is one thing since funerals are for the living to show off their grief in a suitable fashion that is counted by how many boxes of tissue get used to dry the crocodile tears. But my dad was the end of an era; he just wanted to outlive all the SOB's who censored him in life so he was content himself to go to funerals and thus knew he was the lone survivor of his generation so he fully expected that someone would be glad that he had finally died or croaked. I only knew my daddy in his old age as a person since he was always far away from the family because of the perpetual quarrel that my good Christian mother could never find in her heart to forgive. They never spoke a civil word for over 40 years. I loved them both but not together for I did not have one memory of them as a family unit. The aftermath of the Civil War was what made my parents have strife since they thought that was the way God liked to have things happen since he allowed the noble cavalier class to suffer defeat. That growing-up experience amid troop occupation made them hard as nails in all aspects of life. No wonder that generation hated the federal government, and all Republicans with a passion. Both my parents died during winter time or at least cold weather. My mother died in 1943 during February when it was cold as blue blazes for sure. Had to go to Houston for the funeral where she is buried in the cemetery lot with my sister Lissie Taylor Love. No one would tell my father that Laura had died; they just got ready to make the long trip to Houston and then left saying they would return the next day or so from business. Only my little boy Bobby later sat on his granddad's knee and told him everything, describing the casket and flowers and the eulogy words. That boy of mine had an eye for detail and they cried together over that dear old lady for sure. No one else in the family bothered to tell their grief, only took time to cause more grief to an old man who suffered a living hell of not getting to talk to the woman he loved so much. Like I say being an orphan is a mighty good thing in this hard times life of ours. But my dad died in 1950 so he had a few years of never being told much about Laura Estelle's funeral. At least no snow fell during their funerals. To me snow is good only for making ice cream.

But snow ice cream is not safe to eat anymore, thanks to modern mankind. I miss not being able to eat ice cream made from fluffy snow during the icy heart of the wintertime; all the atomic fallout and now pollution make eating things in nature now a hazard to one's own health. But the young folks can't miss what they never knew I guess but some do not know about radiation sickness in the fluffy stuff or angel feathers as we called the flakes falling lightly; youth today act shocked to learn such facts of eating snow like shaved icy cones. Students don't get themselves to class to learn while there; they want sports and girl-crazy things now in school and that was why school officials made boys play on playgrounds on far side of schoolhouse away from the girls and boys sat on one side of room away from the girls during instruction. Thus, all did school learning when on the school grounds, not foolish sports and socializing to waste time. And now one has to take a class before going to regular school such as pre-kindergarten. Even have to take a course in manners or etiquette now since manners in public are a thing of the past when adults once always switched any youth who was disobedient or sassy in public, but now tis child abuse to correct a child so they act horrible and inflict their bad manners on the whole world around them so it is no wonder other nations are getting ahead of US in education. Well, the winterwonderland is changed forever for me now that no snow ice-cream can be eaten from the fence tops, just like foul language in public is the accepted way to berate anyone who displease you. There usta to be a time and a place for everything.

My dad had his time and place for cussing and coursing around or carousing. He

did everything at an appropriate time and place, no cursing at the dinner table, just when something aggravating happened right at the time to cuss up a storm. Now, youth curse and cuss when saying hand me that danged butter dish on far side of the f_____ing table. Can't believe the foul mouths of young folks today in 1982. Well, my dad could persuade folks to listen to him and then go along with his way of doing things; he had charisma to hold attention; he could charm the pants off his unsuspecting souls for a deal. He would have made a good preacher today, and he did indeed inspire and urge all his grandsons to go into that line of work as ministers. Folks just could not help themselves from listening to his BS or general talkative nature. My dad could turn a bad situation all around; folks would start out disliking him and then just change gears right in the middle of it all as he convinced them to see his way. He was never a wet blanket at a gathering of the party hardy crowd in town. But he was too smart for his own good and wouldn't let well enough alone when getting a few to see his light of day, for he had to convince the whole world of the crowds right then rather than slowly work his way over the crowds. That made the first converts to his ideals get jealous that others would get in on his deals so the first threw a monkey wrench into the scheme of things for sure. That is life when your friends get fed up with you first of all. That really gets folks hot under the collar, enough to last a life time for sure.

Hot anger is the worst thing in a small town when friends get tired of you; you just have to get out of town for a spell like my daddy did. Summer time anyway gets so hot that one could catch on fire just from the sunshine on your back. That is how warm friendships can get when turning sour for a while. I hear that often enough in this old life. I hear just about everything I know as everything exciting to repeat is hearsay anyway. That keeps my ears burning red hot for sure. Thus, I just make the rounds of seeing my friends all along so they do not get tired of seeing me coming. No use to wear out your welcome mat before you trod on their door stoop; tarry not long at anyone place. This way I made good seeming friends of merchants as well so that they would give me good deals as they often said for good business reasons. I was fat so getting a good deal on big clothes was hard to find. But my daddy bought his clothes right off the rack, just fits his carcass to a T. My son can do that too long as he stays slim and trim unless he gets a wife like sweetheart Miss Ella to fatten you up so no one else will want your "lard ass" around. Food is about the best thing in the world to substitute for all the worries and disappointments that life has to offer; I should know. I smile though to offset my ugliness but can con-tort my face enough to stop a clock, which allows me not to realize that my lifetime of woes are about to overtake me or overwhelm me for sure. That's life.

I still make time to go fishing when I really want to fish. I just go, regardless of what is said to need to be done first; otherwise, never would I get to do what I really want to do in this world. I can scare up a mess full of frying pan goodies when I really cast my rod and reel just right; them fishes just jump into the pan when Miss Ella is there to fry them because they liked her good looks so much and meant to please that woman to death, mainly theirs of course. And this is a pretty fishy story so you had better believe it or else be bored to death. And this is one tale to get my wife to go with me to show her pretty face in the water's edge so the fishes will hear tell to come see what they are dying for. We don't go fishing near enough but just barely enough to keep our fishy tastes satisfied in this old life for sure. We go mainly to the farm for vacations and visits where we catch bull frogs; I gig them with my old time prong gig on a pecan branch stick. Those frog legs and backs are delicious beyond words so I won't talk much about them in that case. We eat 'em often as I can gig them crockers. Life at the farm named Win-niford Way has changed a lot; all the old timers are dead and the place is run down worse than the Great Depression days. My dad in law died in 1943 the same year as my mother in February for her; he died on his wedding anniversary which was the 18th of October and also the wedding date for his son Horace. Sickness has taken every dime the family could get their fingers a hold of. Money was like a pretty lady who is faster than the speed of light to hang out only with the high rollers and fancy dan of this world. Money likes the rich ones who will do anything to get their glitzy attention and then stop at nothing to keep ther pacified so money is like a whore of Babalyon out for a showy good time with no intent to stay around sickly folks with ill's to tell. Thus, we were becoming poor as Jobe's turkey. Poverty was just around the corner for sure.

Poor times were a coming to the farmlifestyle for sure. No longer could a good living be made on the land as free enterprise. Cotton was allotted to the west Texas desert country and now the turkey industry was being set up by all the wild wolves that the goodie-two-shoes wanted to preserve and bring back after being wiped out so new-born calves and poultry would or could be raised. The wild life was returning to East Texas treelined wilderness country since all the good ole boys had moved to town to earn a living there. Most from around the farm went to Big D or its suburbs such as Mesquite to earn a regular paying job. Now, the hunters were long gone from the farm scene and the roaming varmints took over. Wolves ate turkey every day until no more existed. Miss Lynna could not shoot wolves fast enough and she did shoot them in the heart on the run, making that wolf not know he was dead for some minutes till he had done runned back to the organized pack where his fresh smelly blood made them hungry into a feeding frenzy to make them start fighting each other and thus killing two or three more of themselves; that way one shot got perhaps four more of those preying wolves (now, you can believe me or not but this is the unvarnished truth if ever I spoke it). But the wolf numbers were beyond Miss Lynna's cunning control; she could not shoot them fast enough. The women folks had to go to town to get a job in the sweat shops; the ready to wear industry came to Commerce town but really built factories and outlet shops at Sulphur Springs, the county seat of our homeplace landgrant. Well, all the women pooled their rides to save gas and to keep company together especially during the bad weather. Winter ice made it dangerous to travel early in the morning before first light and after five P.M. which was also dark by then during the bleak wintry days. The usual two or three snows added to the misery and danger of being on the road. But God was with those women drivers as they never even dented one fender (always seemed odd that God did not want the men to earn a good enough living off the land so the women would not have to go to a job way off but like I said all the preachers credited God with keeping the ladies safe not any good driving skills of those wise women). God works in mysterious ways to hear tell from the preachers who have to make their career jobs worthwhile by keeping folks informed of the good Lord's latest intent as a flash from heaven.

God displayed his anger into storms as the preachers so often stated. And then the legal laws of this great land of ours call storms an act of God so who am I to say otherwise????? Working the land as God intended continued on the farm place for a few more years. The last bale of cotton the old place won first prize in town as being the very first cotton bale of the season as usual; the fine horses named Maud and Queen were hitched up to drive the prize cotton into town. Queen and Maude pulled that 1600 pounder down the main drag to the gin. Their polished harness shined like new-money gold coins in the sunlight. And we all felt proud as glory land be to see that old timey sight amid all the popping Johnny Deere tractors that were displacing those true and real horse-power beauties. A lost era was what we wuz seeing for sure and did not realize it till this day for sure.

The old cotton gin in Cumby was a relic with its rusty machinery that old man Strickland repaired till he was greasy as black land mud all the time, and he also had worked as plowman during the war when all the younger men were gone for 4 years. That gin business was now called a feed and seed store since cattle feed was becoming the real money maker. Cotton fields were being turned back into pasture lands. Scrub oak and scraggly pecan trees began to come up all over the once well-manicured fields of the countryside. The beauty of a farmer's paradise was becoming a lost art for sure. Weeds and grass seemed the destiny of the farmland now. Besides, no farmer had 12 children to work the land now; just two or three children at the most were considered a big family. Naturally, all the able-bodied and smart fellows had rushed to town to Big D to get a weekly paying job for their hard labor rather than to have just one payday a year when the crop was finally sold. The women were going to the teachers's college in Commerce to get themselves a good paying regular check also if you can imagine that teaching was considered a good paying job, but that was how poor most of the folks on the farmland had become. They wuz poor as church mice and was eager to get a regular paycheck coming into the household so both the wife and husband worked their heads and decided to have brains to sell rather than brawn work from their hands that no longer in America had value or much respect. The college degreed person was the height of respect suddenly in the small towns. Money in the bank still gained respect of course and was exactly what the brain powered approach was seeking for sure.

Cash poor folks were willing to do anything honest to get a regular paycheck. And the old Mayo Normal School or East Texas State College was just the place to gain that skill. And that made Commerce boom with rooms to rent so my kin made a mint with rooms to let and also by feeding a dozen or so students at each meal time. That keep free enterprise working for a good spell. That made communiting also a growing industry, helping gasoline or service stations a lot. Whole carloads of students left the surrounding small towns to go to Commerce for the daily grind of classes. School was now big business for sure, particularly for Commerce citizens who now called themselves Commercites like some disease instead of Commerstonians like the old timers did to align themselves with a Jeffersonian way of calling themselves. If you live long enough, you will see everything change so much that it is no longer recognizable and then maybe come back to what it was called originally such as the school system being called middle school and then Junior High School but now alas Middle School again. Albeit, I prefer Junior High School since middle sounds like a no-man's land for the students to ponder till becoming grown enough to go onward. Nomenclature is an odd thing when enough powerful folks decided to change names to their bias or prejudice for some personal reason. The farmland was being sold for low prices by those eager to leave the rural stigma as it was loudly called for those who lived out in the miserable countryside. The landholders who did work their farms moved to town and lived in big Victorian houses with a dozen bedrooms, and even the Victorian houses were called junk dwellings by the big-city newspapers who set the pace for cultural tastes. Being country was worse than being hillbilly. To be called rural was worse than having body odor or BO as the city slickers laughed to each other and bad breath or halitosis with its fetid stigma was not nearly so fowl as living in a rural setting. Any kind of cowboy togs were really low classed and boots were for the hicks for sure. Slacks and/or old suit trousers were the vogue or fashion even among the poor. Overalls were strickly for the job site since most of my co-workers changed clothes into slacks before leaving the locker room at the railyard before going home even in our cars; just in case we had car trouble no one self-respecting wanted to be seen in those old "depression-era" garb. Our attire had become a symbol on our lowly level not to wear clothing remesentent of the great depression decade. The socially accepted apparel was relatively cheap since so many sweat shops existed now that the ladies worked there so cheaply and did not make husband's clothing anymore as of the past times. And the army life made guys seek civvies and garments more dressy than before. Baggy trousers were the style for the redneck array or accoutrements of the day. Men seldom talked about their frocks sinne the wife bought them the current vestments to wear. We were all just sheep being led to the stylish slaughter house of design. We all still dressed much alike but more color array and stylish cuty of articles of clothing began to appear, only the Queers wore outlandish designs and wild colors (the Burmuda shorts even with knee socks was a queer thing to wear in every sense of the word). But the wives got blamed for whatever a man wore in public; he of course did not pick them out so why not lay the blame where it originated. But a lot of country ways remained in the city bred boys; they still visited the old hometowns and old friends during holidays or when going back to visit kin as I still did. The farmland now had grass growing with grazing cows.

Grade A milk barns became the rage and the cotton fields sure enough disappeared. The small odd shaped milk barns began to dot the landscape like crazy. And the huge expense of building a milk barn with a herd of cattle milkers or milch cows took a fortune just to get started initially in the business (and milch cow is spelled much different from the word milk that you drink; I learned that from my son's class notes because one professor had a pet peeve about that error). I know perfectly well the difference. It is not easy knowing everying so prim and proper. Just you try being perfect for a change like I am doing (it ain't easy being in the know all the time while others are content being ignorant selves). The halls of Valhalla are full of my kind of folks while the depts of hades are opulated by the slothful content of the ignorant fools; there always is a snake in the grass to cause discontent. And I just maybe that slithering hair-brain solution. Just as the good Lord Jehovah is a dual personality of rewards and punishment to balance life's dark and light experiences, so is both good and evil acts a duality depending on the moody results of the lifelong situation. And that is why the Bible is such a good book of the mighty Lord's eternal will as a didactic lessons.

The good people of Texarkana practice the duality of religion to the letter by just talking the subject to death, instead of getting busy and correcting the evil influences. 'Tis better to name-call each other as being truly sinful rather than to correct bad influences; they tell you that God will get you good if you vex them in any way but yet allow the mafia to continue business as usual. Such as the headquarters of the largest stolen car ring in the United States operating out of the twin cities for decades and still does in 1982 to this day on a smaller scale; the Jewish mafia also has connections from here to Houston and to Los Vegas of course. The 3 families in Texarkana connect to the old line Nostra Costra, even WASP variations of the racketeers are a big part of the mob or underworld here in East Texas. Attending church and giving the regular tithe makes the mafia lieutenants better-than-God for sure since money is the real God in this town. My good friends the Sangalli brothers from Italy origins with their mother hardly speaking a word of understandable American lingo could easily learn to pain autos all night long and all day for 24-hour shifts without end; they made a fortune keeping all of their brothers busy painting cars that were at their business place, yet they never knew who really owned the vehicles or cared (and that is a major part of the syndrome of looking the other way by good Christian folks when making money but should find out who owns the property beforehand). But they attack any individual who does believe in God as they do, using a smokescreen of verbal abuse to hide the truly evil blend of the mafia stealing and killings. But the need for money as big greed is always greater than knowing the truth or settling old scores, and besides one can repent later on the death bed and still keep the ill gotten means of money. God is like that with his mercy to let anyone who attends church prosper (and only God allows anyone to become wealthy if they are good Christians so that jaded view reveals that only big rich are truly good Christians since billions of dollars reveal that they are billions of times better than the poor slob on the street, and just how Republican that can be shows in the voting record of those usurpers of goodness). I am too smart to fall for that line from sleazy big-wigs in this two-faced town.

Texarkana is a Little Chicago all the time all over the place. Most citizens act like they never heard tell about the mafia being here until you get them alone and then they talk the truth. More people just disappear here than anywhere else in the U.S. Also, more one-car accidents happen here than anywhere else in America, to get rid of anyone who tries to correct the evil business dealings. And this puts the fear of God into the surviving family members for sure. And that is God's will so a good Christian must not mess with what God's big picture plan or else that sin will get punished for not minding your own business. Ho, ho, what a scam the big ones in this town have spread around as gospel; the Emperor's Clothes truly does exist as a way of life in this township. But nothing is ever done to correct the evil in town since God's will is being done just by attending Church. And everybody knows that God could wave a hand and will when he sees fit to make the big picture come together (and we are all too ignorant to mess with God's plan) so God will wave his hand to destroy those he sees doing wicked things when he pleases. Even watering my yard during a draught is considered evil and wicked because God sent the dry spell for a purpose and I am interfering so that is why I am not the richest man in the world because I must endure penance for adding water from my deep well instead of waiting for the good Lord to send the sky-juice to save my garden and flowers. I am disrupting the good Lord's plan by keeping greenery alive during harsh dry times (and these publicans or re-publicans as do-gooders always talk to God each day and consequently know his personal divine plan for the universe while those of us like me do me are not in on the diving aspects of God, yet I am a member of the only true church named for Jesus Christ as the Bible states so I know all these charlatans for the rubes they are while they fool the meek and low educated folks). East Texas is the declared third most ignorant part of the United States (Mississippi and Arkansas are the worst according to the rankings). These same know-it-all religionists delight in the sadistic column in the newspaper that has a Jeers and Cheers section that enables caustic remarks about events and even about past letter writers in the name of God and country no less; these know-it-alls harangue anyone with a different view about everything, saying leave-it-or-love-it for this is paradise on earth since they have a personal conversation with God; now that is crazy religion for sure as they are the ones perpetuating evil in the name of God. Their kind of God has no hindness for sure and is not worth the time of day made into their image.

Well, the Lord helps those who help themselves when it comes to dipping into the funds of political windfalls and other messy dealings so this fact of conflict was time enough to make a praying man out of anyone in public affairs for sure. Bingo played in churches and pari-mutuel betting are the opposite social issues of the pure of heart citizens even when a big Roman Catholic Church offers bingo gaming in his educational building facilities in Chicago or New York City but then all they have to do is cross themselves a few dozen times more and burn a hundred more candles that they provide for a fee into the prayer box and they then go to heaven with their idols or icons which they worship. The betting or gaming is wrong even if a big-wig churchman or bishop endorses it; the road to hell is paved with good intentions for sure. The professional religionists rationalizes that the gaming funds are used for the missionary projects; now, there's a conflict of interest and a big hypocritically done view if I ever heard one; that's enough to cause a hissie fit in the name of the Lord since the preachers and bishops are not doing their ordained job very well. Someone has got to stand up for evil in the name of God.

And the evil whorehouses or bordellos still exist in this twin city that is twice as nice to hear tell from the money grubbing crowd. As one fellow put it well indeed about the oldest profession of working girls: "She will give you something soap and water won't wash off." All the preaching in the world has not stopped that mortal sin so why will anything said by the loud talkers against individual sins stop the brazen deeds of the mafia, nothing can stop the greed of the mafia lords in town until laws do their work. And greed is a bigger temptation than sex since money is all that really counts and will buy anything or will purchase everything else for sure. Tom says too much about the evil mafia and talk is cheap when the law agencies do nothing because of being bought off so the dull witted respond that talking about evil deeds only means that the individual is evil to admit to them. Confronting ethical views with preachers has done no good either against the mafia since preachers have not told the functional illiterates what to do or to think in responding to the community problems. At least I do my own thinking based on the one Good Book King James Bible so no preacher ever disappoints me when his adultery and thievery becomes well-known as most surely do.

Preachers are worshipped more than the Bible nowadays if the guy is handsome and got the gift of gab. I still believe in the good book's sayings, not a person's. I make my own mistakes myself, not to be a sheep led by the smiles of the glib. That is still having the medieval mind around to allow leaders to tell you what to do. I drive myself as a leading force in this good life. I finally had to buy myself a car; the trolley and bus system in Texarkana got bought out by the consortium of General Motors stock owners so that automobiles would have to be bought as the only means of transportation. And the tire companies were also in on the conspiracy (this duplicity never got fined or rebuked in any way since the super rich stockholders own 90% of the media to control the opinion makers; and they holler media black-balling when not getting a 100% coverage to their selfish desires). Now, that is a true Little-Hitler ism in American life for sure when the superrich power structure can't be disagreed with for a moment; democracy is supposed to discuss all ideas and facts in lengthy detail before voting rather than attacking the person or ad-hominem as is the fashion of the sneaky lout or fascist movement in this country. God is always on the side of the winner so I guess God is too rich to care for the poor and loves only the wealthy in America now.

I could keep cooking up the facts about this sorry subject all day but no use to beat a dead horse to death again. No one wants to listen to hard decisions to be made. This kind of thinking or challenge puts some getty-up in my get alongs for sure. I like a really difficult challenge, unlike the leaders who are in power to loot and plunder the local treasury while sounding and acting Christian. Tis enough to make a poor old boy want some of the action for himself when the thieves keep winning the day all the time. But I keep having my own problems to solve when the good times keep coming my way such as more family relatives on the prowl.

My old Unk Scotty came to visit us. I thought he was dead but he did scare the living day lights out of me when he knocked on my front door. He banged on the old door stoop loud enough to awaken the dead which was me and he posed as a man buying old rags so I fell for the gag until he chuckled his deep roar of having put one over on me (all my kin do something funny like this when having not visited in a long time, just to see if I will recognize them and remember all the family wit).

Taylor 154/154

My witty Unk Scotty came with his usual dry-wit. We nit-wits had a happy reunion. The reunion was nice again for old times sake for sure. We talked all day and into the long night. He was still in his prime from way back when or so he said often enough to reassure himself and me. Old Unk made the rounds of all the kin just in case he might die prematurely, an untimely death for him of course. He had finally started thinking that he might die eventually and that is the first sign of weakness that the aged have when on death's door in our family. He had good reason to think upon death; folks around him had been dying like flies of pneumonia. A rash of death had happened after a change of the weather conditions to a cold streak. The birds he brought influenza or St. Louis Encephalitis to our neck of the woods also so I knew what the old Unk was really thinking about in his habitat of the Big Thicket Forest-lands that were so damp when the coldness settled into for the duration; he was a lively soul but when the end comes then nothing much can be done to avoid it. Plus the rising and falling of the sap time brings on changes in old folks's blood pressure to die when they have held on for a long time but just can't resist the new feelings that change has brought to their old bodies. And now that I am getting onto half a century here in 1952 I do know what that feeling is like, an echo of my youth calling to do all the things I once liked but yet something deep inside saying that no longer am I the same person that I was; why, I would not recognize myself if I met a stranger like me at my doorway. I now notice all these things that the old timey folks proclaimed as gospel when I was young and too busy to listen to the good sense of the rocking chair crowd who themselves had once ruled the known world of Texas and wherever else they had roamed. I am as old as the century so I get reminded of my mortality every time the newspaper comes out with the masthead date so prominently displayed for all to see. Thus, the media press does get faulted for a lot of jerking me about. I just get jerked around by life in general so sy not more???? But then I did learn that I have lived in two centuries since a new century begins in the ought one not the double digit as 1900 is still the last century so 1901 is the new century as will be 2001A.D. which I doubt that I will see since I got sick beyond any cure. Only my sweetheart wife Miss Ella got me all-better with her lovein care from the big medical center in Houston that did not even find a cure for me. Alas, my sweetheart wife Miss Ella cooked up a good country meal for old Unk; the best pan of corn pone you ever tasted. We were living high on the hog that day with good old timey memories for the pasttimes of our lives. Unk bragged on me just to get on my best side by declaring that I always told a good yarn and that my vocal inflections added the humor to otherwise unfunny events such as everyday things like the mean mafia doing their do on folks who ignored the meanness. Unk said that I was a gagman from wayback and I took him at his word on that statement, being the wisecracker that I am reputed to be, with my amusing stories about common life experiences. Whimsical I am not by intent in my burlesquing of life's daily problems. That is my due to my comical ways in general that pass as a laugh-a-minute in the drollery of life's jesting. But only a real comedian would be a joker about serious things that need correcting. And I would not pull your leg unless you gave me the chance to do so. Funny, Ha-ha is my motto through life, as I go my merry-making way. No need to cry over spilt milk in this life. Just sing the praises of fools like me to get a grin that catches more timely things than a sour-puss look. And just look at me, the last punster with a comedy routine made to order by daily-every-day thing that no one else takes a second gander to see like I do. Just hang around me and I will show you a thing or two for sure. Nothing much exciting happens so I will have to enlighten you to all that togetherness will bring our way, that otherwise is mundane and too commonplace to realize is really funny. I only got my ways to show-off so don't get all huffy and leave disgusted for that is your loss, not mine for sure in this busy lifetime of ours. Well, my old Unk came for his own peculiar reasons to visit besides to see us all one last time so I tried to get it all put into good sounding Taylor-made words. He just wanted to visit us all was all he ever said in reality to my probing questions about the subject. But I knew better since he never did anything without a plan or a purpose to make a dollar, being a stingy Scottish man born in the old country that he was by nature and just could not help himself for being the natural way that he was. Unk even brought a gift, but not just any old gift of a present. He blessed us with one of those hellacious gifts that can't be used or even passed-on as a Christmas present to some other relative; he gave us his ancient family blessings in long idle words. His mouthy words took a

very long time to get said or bantered about. Now, that is just how stingy the old way was even with his mouthy words that tongue could not tell fast enough: no money was spent or given away, that was for sure. And he had walked to see us in order to save fare on a bus, just like olden times when I was a mere boy to save money by walking around the whole state. I should know how he preferred to walk since I had corns or bunyans on my heels and toes to show the long past scars of my encounters with old Unk. Unk really came to get my teenage boy to walk around Texas and through life with him like I did as a mere youth. I let my son go so he could have the experience of a lifetime that same way as I did. But I required him to be back in a few weeks so his education at the formal institution of the college would continue. It now takes more book learning knowledge just to get-by in this world; no dumb clucks allowed in the future world that will be more competitive in a truly technical way. Learning has to have a dollar mark behind it to put it to good use or the average yahoo will not go get any book-smarts. Dollar signs are the only reasonable pointers toward getting an education for an American these days; dollar marks show the direction like a road map to get a degree now that greedy politicians are in the act of funding colleges since the great uncivil war days; the American Industrial Revolution was still grinding it way through society and the industrialist or proletariat owns America now so only a technical education has an assigned value.

And old Unk Scotty knew the real value of a dollar better than any blood relative so he taught my boy well the true value of the money symbols. Unk still had the very first dime he ever earned with compounded interest no less. No one could deny that old man his due in life. Unk always brought interesting things when he visited and one of them was rain when he visited; the rains came to twin city Texarkana. The rain fell half way, only rained in Texas following the State Line brick street as a demarkation line. Twas a pretty sight to see a wall of rain water falling on the Just and unjust folks of this world, not to imply that Arkansans are any worse than a Texan or better either. Rain falls on us all about with the same frequency that we deserve out of this old life.

Unk himself was getting wet as a mud hen so he improvised an umbrella out of a palm tree frone that he brought with himself as a bundle of casing for a suitcase or valisee fashioned from the Big Thicket dense growth and then that is the truth if ever I told it since has lived half of forever and been or done everything one time or more in this old world. But that improzised was also how the umbrella got invented by my uncle Scotty in the first place when he was a youth back in the old country decades and decades ago as a mere chap of a boy. But the umbrella has been improvised and improved so many times that it no longer resembled its first, simple origins; manufacturers improve everything into oblivion from its first days and thus re-invent the wheel each time with newer models when being left along would be much better for us old timers. Now, that's the true case history study of the umbrella origins if you will just believe my divine revelations.

Divine providence kept my Unk Scotty healthy and long-living beyond the expected three-score-and-ten years that the good book TheBible promised kindly folks. But old age was Unk's long suit in life since he said that holy water falling from the sky kept him cleansed of sin and all impure thoughts of hatred that make folks age and die from angry feelings. Unk though didn't have to lie about his age for he usually avoided the old age subject. But he once stated that he just hidaway to make old age or Father Time keep searching to find him and thus the Grim Reaper could not find him in the Big Thicket forestlands so he was safe from the wrinkles of life and the ravages of old age could not catch-up with him for sure. Thus, the divine rains that flooded over the earth were searching for dear old Unk Scotty and just kept sending the sky juice to find him and that was another reason that old Unk was so prosperous because he had to cash in on all the bounty that the rains brought to find him so the prosperity also helped covered his old self in new disguises. The divine rains also cleansed the foul air smells that accumulated before the rains or else the foul air would suffocate all the population of the earth. Besides, the foul smells accumulate on the upper lip of the constant complaining person and that is another reason that old age can find so many grippers in this life and that dank smell is the Grim Reapers response to bad odors from the droll crowds of life. Unk also kept on the move, on the constant go to avoid being caught by the Grim Reaper in one place too long so old Unk was always ready to be on the run for his life. The "Red-eye" as he called his late hour jousting and running was always ready.

Old Unk Scotty hopped a freight like any good hobo would do and that was the "red eye" express train to his way of thinking. "So let us go good places, Poudna," as he would exclaim in an excited vocal response when saving money for his travel expenses. By cracky, old Unk was a cheapie for sure. A real cheap-jack like always. To travel or to go gratis was his heavenly delight, going dirt cheap or on the house to save his money for his really old age years; he stayed on the run simply to avoid old age from finding him so he outran the grim reaper for sure and thus he just hid from the ranages of getting old and that way he didn't have to lie about his age the way some folks do to say they are much younger when actually not getting any younger themselves like the rest of us poor old boys in town. I would never deprecate any relative of mine, especially a rich uncle like my scotfree-jacking Unk Scotty of the old country. But cut-rate deals in life were his main-stay; he would cut his own throat to save a penny and then bleed to death when it was convenient. To undervalue old Unk's bargain seeker status would be a cheap-shot on my part since I am a haggling huckster who can out-jew a Jew anytime myself. It is hardy har-har time again for me to tell my good old fun times that took me through life when all the bad economic years of the Great Depression and onward nearly killed me or wore me down to a nubbin. I had to get rid of my old Unk before he corrupted my son into some kind of strange animal much like myself; I wanted my boy to have the good life that I never had so I shielded him from his Scottish kin or traveling uncle. I just threw old Unk his hat and retorted in true Taylor-made fun form: "Hello, here's your hat; what's your hurry?" That tickled old Unk pink or nearly to death so he left chuckling all over himself or tee-heeing a streak down the roadway of life as he laughed to himself for the next mile or so that someone kin could do unto him before he did.

But my son sneaked off and went a traveling for sure with that old Unk of mine. Now, that was a chip off the old block for sure. Yet when those two ornery cusses got gone good, I felt like a silver spoon had been taken from my mouth. Unk and my boy were going joy seeking together as best I could remember from my own jaunts with that old man when I was mere lad on the wunderlust days and times of my life just before World War II and onward till now. I was now a homebody and would live and die in this dull place called twin city or sin city incorporated. Unk and my son would meet a lot of skuz-balls and sleaz y folks for sure but that is just what a growing boy needs to learn about this mean old life. The good and the bad are all mixed together and sometimes a dukes-mixture in the same ornery person. Some folks need to beat his arse for breakfast to taste good. And old Unk Scotty was just the feller for doing that kind of ornery stuff.

Doing what comes naturally was the order of the day for old Unk and my boy if they continued on the roadway of life like when I went on my jaunt. And that way of life was full of good times earning a living and paying the daily bills when a cheapskate finally decided to spend something. But I prefer staying home to earn a dull living and paying my high bills; I didn't want to see the wife and boy starve to death or even go hungry on their jaunt through life so I had to stay firmly planted in my status quo routine while the old Unk Scotty went a roving like always. Young folks think they know everything; they believe they are as smart as I thought I was at their age which just goes to show how exalted self-importance can become in this old life when seeking your own way along the exciting pathways over the next hills-ocks of the fun times yet experienced.

I am not stooped over from the ageless seeking of my life pathways but I do get all bent out of shape when things impede my own freedoms to achieve the best that I can become. Yet I still do sometimes bend over too far myself when looking for that proverbial frog after a good homecooked meal full of beans and blacked-eyed peas that cause a windy breeze for sure. My kids usta to search for that frog just under the kitchen flooring when I would stoop over too far myself after eating a good mess of string beans and cornpone. But my little-girl figured all that tomfoolery out real fast as a small fry.

My little girl is all grown up and has a baby boy of her own now. She is paying for her raising for sure; that's the only way kids can understand why their parents do all the mean seeming things that they do for the moral good of the little tykes. Kids need corraling - if you do a good job of parenting. We are all going to fist-city real fast when trying to make kids mind our commands and thus be responsible citizens eventually. My wife's best friend Beulah Wommack Hale died of a brain

tumor from being too smart for her own good said the sympathy bound friends, for she was a terrific artist and intellectual so her head was running over with ideals that good all knotted up into a ball of twisted concepts that became a tumor. Or so that is the homefolks prognosis of things like that when we sit around jawboning life to death. If you don't believe me, then just go to grass and stick your finger up where the light never does shine!! I ain't a kidding about that suggestion none.

nyhow, Beulah was one of our good Commerce connected friends who moved to Texarkana during the Big WWII for a job; her husband Coot or Basil Hale was a railroader for the Cotton Belt too as me. Beulah was reared at Cooper town which nearly burned completely to the ground again recently; seems that arsony hits that town every few decades such as in 1894 it nearly burned up when the Mayo Normal School moved to Commerce then as a new start because Professor Mayo's wife was a Booth and her dad was pastor then of the First Christian Church of Commerce. Anyhow, as I was saying, Beulah was a terrific friend and a good Christian lady churchworker for sure. She and Coot only had two girls, one Gwendlyn about age of my little girl and then several years later another daughter three years younger than my son. Their baby girl named Donna Gail was a holy terror for sure. She would walk on the piano keys just to get attention, even if it was a whipping which she seldom got. Well, that tumor was finally operated on and it busted all its juicy liquid onto poor Beulah's brain as it was severed to be removed from the brain. Beulah had limited speech from then on and she always called everyday right at noon to talk about old timey things when my wife was sitting down to eat lunch; well, my plumb wife looked like she never missed a meal a day in her life so the delay certainly did not hurt her. And of course, my kindly sweetheart wife Miss Ella would listen to all the idle chat and just let Beulah ramble to her content. That only continued for less than six months when all speech left the poor dying woman; then the phone would ring and that was a signal that dire emergency help was needed by Beulah herself who had no vocal responses left in her so my dear wife would take a bus and transfer uptown to go be with her, to comfort by then telling all the humorous and jolly times of their past good times together. And that was what the pitiful dying woman needed, not some one to sit and talk about how lucky she would be to go to her greater reward in heaven as so-many were inclined to do. Well, It took nearly two-hours to get bussed one way to that Beverly part of town when a walk through the pastures that are now streets over to that part of town would have been faster but no one trespassed for any reason on someone else's property back then. Well, we were all relieved when the fateful end of Miss Beulah came and we cried our eyes out like good Christian friend on display in a church funeral should do. But husband Coot was going to be mean and deny Beulah's old-maid sisters any decision in the funeral or allow Beulah to be buried in the old family Wommack plot near Cooper so my kindly wife firmly told Coot that death and funerals are for the living and that he would die one day himself so have some compassion since those sisters never said an unkindly word to his face or to his back so he was living up to his nickname of "old-Coot" since hw was a grouch most of the time (Coot and my wife played 42-domino tournaments together and that was the only time he was seen or heard to laugh; for he was undoubtedly the unhappiest man in the world for some reason) so Coot or Basil Hale listened to my wife's good advice and that kept a family schism from developing right then and there on the spot. Beulah was buried where she had wanted to be, at Cooper. And then the daughter Gwendlyn rushed in to take all the car-load and rented trailer full of oil paintings to California where they were sold, leaving none for little Donna Gail. All the scenic bluebonnets were to perfection like the hand of God had directed the natural color choice and the view that had painted the moving wind among the flowers of old highways throughout Texas. That Little Donna Gail grew up to wed a preacher even though she had been such a bad-rat and then she visited wanting pictures painted by her mother but her alcoholic sister had disposed of them all, just for a dram in her own mug shot of life. Tis a shame that such artwork got destroyed. I know the pity of that since I draw pictures of all my friends and co-horts or co-workers and then fold the pages away in my looseleaf notebook for only my eyes. I usta to draw caricatures of my friends on the garage doors, having them do things in a comical fashion till some of them took issue with the interpretation so I ceased and desisted not wanting to offend what few friends I had. But that's life for you in a small town when they get jealous of your talent so they don't want you or me to do anything they can't do better. The conservative mind wins every time to

conquer all and destroy whatever offends their immediate responses to life situations. Dear Beulah indeed went to her greater glory. Just guess that God needed her worse in heaven than to let her finish raising her young daughter Donna Gail. Coot her husband soon remarried and that was a farce. But mistakes are the order of the day for some ornery folks like Coot. We tried to keep the old ties going but time changed all that and not for the best either. The step-mother lived up to her mythical namesake in Cinderella's old tale; well, little Donna Gail was treated like white trash by the blood children of the step-mother. Yet in old age, Donna Gail was the one to visit the mean old stepmother in an old folk's home where she otherwise was neglected with no one to comb her long hair or to buy her nightgowns so Donna Gail did her Christian duty as in her own words stated was the thing to do or else she would suffer a worse fate at the end of her life someday; that's the redneck philosophy for one to get treated a little-bit worse than you mistreated someone mean to you in your ugly ridden life experiences. Coot had a weak stomach always so he drank milk and all the ugly combinations of thick liquids to ease his pain but he soon got over that when all the meance of real life came his way from that wicked stepmother of the East; he died a dried-up man before his time about the time that Donna Gail graduated from highschool. But then seldom did we visit Coot and his new wife since the new Mrs. Basil Hale was too busy being her mean step-mother self to come our way. And even Mrs. Liela Lumpkin tried to continue her friendship to Beulah's memory but failed as did we (Beulah always won the town competition for the best decorated Christmas scene paintings on display so she was missed and well-known for that as well in town). Well, the Navy mother's auxiliary kept Mrs. Lumpkin busy and also the Woodmen of the World Insurance sales so she got around with good reason to keep tabs on little Donna Gail who was at least fed and clothed well enough. But Liela Lumpkin's own adopted son Virgil disowned her when finding out he was adopted since he had never been told until he went into the service, learning that his family tree was only a stump really bugged him so he left town and never spoke to them again. So like I said and keep saying kids step on your toes as little children but rample your heart strings to pieces when grown. Only raising kids of your own can make you pay truly for all your own wild oat sewing for sure. That is life's eternal plan or fringe benefits since everything you say or do will some day come home to roost or to haunt you so the old timers liked to say and laugh to my smug face when I was tyke journeying about the terrain with my Unk Scotty just for the sheer hell of it all through life's trek or long roadway..

But I only laugh when it happens to others, to get their ironic comeuppance. I have enough of my own troubles sewed to enjoy seeing sorrow happen to other hateful folks. I just live and let live; that is my motto as I like to proclaim, for I never laugh in one's face or tell them that they deserve what happens to them when unpleasant things occur. For that, I do not have to eat my words or appear the fool when life's moments get tedious or tedious as the old songs stated (like I say, a sad song does not care who sings it). I had rather go through life eating bon-bons and reading dime store novels as a lad of leisure. But my family does not let me have the time for that sort of good timing it through life. I have to jump to it when they are around, just to stay one step ahead of their scheming plans to get me to do things they want done. Life with the family is one big behest, full of urgent prompting to get-on with it or else be left behind. Sometimes I feel like I am in a jail in my own home with them calling the shots; more like a bagino during the religious wars when a prison for a good Christian was more like a brothel; and that is the way loving commands can get to feeling when coming too constant all the time. Everyday life can get to be like a baddy movie when the opponent of the hero in the fast-moving old timey movies chase each other to extinction (but I soon learned to say all that contrasting of good and evil as being the antagonist versus the protagonist so this elegance I learned in my education by proxy through my son's class notes of the great novels of literature). Anyway, I learned more than I thought possible for my head to hold and then I feared that I would crazy with all those varied thoughts running wild or loose in my many empty brain cells, yet no brain tumor took of residence in my head afterall. Thus, the procurator of my meager education did kill me for sure. But that doesn't mean that I don't give diddle squat or a tinkers damn about highfaluting educated folks with fancy degrees from fine colleges; I just think that a self-made and self-edicated person is the most fun to be around most of the time. I just ain't formal enough for the "edducatd world"; I am casual most

of the time myself anyway, that's all. I do dress for the part or the opportunity as it presents itself. Thus, I am a tatterdenalion or a ragamuffin by the country club standards but then who cares as long as I am not dirty with old or Body Odor smells. I keep myself clean for the sake of society, not need to smell up the world just because I could. I am not like my co-workers who say they do something nice quite by accident but I do nothing by accident, even though accidents do happen to me. Now, put that line in your pipe and smoke it up for sure.

My next door neighbor Jimmy Stevenson borrows pipe tobacco like it is going out of style or else he thinks the opportunity will dry up each time he bums a pipe full. Seems that I took him to raise on that smoky matter. He is a moocher like no body's business; he is a born leach. He though repairs all the broken appliances so that is his pay according to his way of thinking; nothing though is ever done for free so do not let the good deeds fool you in this hard-times life. Jimmy charges for the parts as well he should but the price is goged just as he charged to repairs brakes on my car for each tire what a whole set of four costs at the auto parts; I was fooled till I went to get a few parts to have ready when he came home from his place of employment at P. D. Baxter's auto dealership; I learned my lesson real quick about good old boys from California helping neighbors for the sake of being nice. Jimmy even expects to stay for free in the home of my children when he visits about the country, just to stop in like kinfolks he is a thinking and thus saves motel expenses like he is some dude to hear tell of his free travels and invading your privacy. His kids are a holy terror to break and tear up things while avisitng; both of his adopted daughters have a stump of a family tree on our trunks for sure. Jimmy just laughs when requesting my kin to take the gibs up to the bedroom, thank you.

I didn't take him to raise or I would have sent him to a better school of manners. School was where I sent my children every day the place was open; that is the main reason that I stayed in Texas; Arkansas ran out of money two or three months before the 9 month term ended but most successful businessmen have only an 8th grade education so the community thinks learning beyond the basic 3 R's is more than enough. Over half of the Arkansas county sheriffs cannot read or write and if such a thing is needed they brag about getting a local school teacher to tell them what is needed in the letter; now, that is some law enforcement force. I got more sense than that about knowing why to send kids to school. But I like going to Arkansas and going barefooted with all the hillbillies; they are good folks even though the second lowest school system rating in the nation is there and their roads are the worst of the states in this whole U.S. of A country; they like it that way as they continually say when such comments get made. You can bet your boots that I am right about all this talk. The Arkansas mountains are the pretties in the U.S. of A. I go for the sights each season and for whatever else fun I can find to have.

Fun is as you make it so I try my hardest for sure. I enjoy driving the streets of Texarkana and take a different route to work each day so as to vary the sights. I still think of my good friend Beulah Hale when passing 1925 Hazel Street where she lived when decorating many Christmas Award winning ~~houses~~ ^{houses} in her big windows there. And her daughter Gwendlyn Hale even got a by-line to her interview to singer/song writer Johnny Mercer when he passed through town here in 1945 or 1946 it was actually when her headline read: "Is you or Is You Aint My Favorite Song Bird?" She recognized the famous man when others at the newspaper office failed to realize his celebrity status. That was my daughter's best friend so they knew all the recording stars then like the youth today know all the singers. Gwendlyn even assisted my daughter in eloping and wanted her to defy us parents so she has a lot of reaping to do with her own future children and she has finally gone to drink like a sot, mixed with dope. Gwelyn is an addict for sure so her life is ruined as she refuses help while the ornery Donna Gale as a younger sister was mean and has become a Christian lady like her dead mother was. So you never can tell what the future has in store. Just as I pray to God about my heathern co-workers: "Dear Lord, bless my co-workers; you know who they are as they call your name often enough in vain lip service." They are their own worst enemy so help them repent someday before it is too late, as I beg. That keeps the nay-sayers off my back and theirs when the gossiping or jaw-jacking gets too fowl mouthed for me to endure any longer. Folks in this town of Texarkana try to insult loud-mouthed sinners to their face but never try to stop the mafia activity that brings business to town saying if you are born to be shot, you won't drown so God protects the good people. But free will exists on earth so God does not drive our cars so to speak in an exact destination. We drive ourselves to hades.

We drive our loved ones to distraction when we do not take responsibility for our own actions when saying that the devil made me do it. Free Will gives us the chance to do evil or be good as God awaits our arrival when the graves will give-up their dead on Judgement Day for each lips to confess their pardition then, if the Bible be true as this is in the Good Book that the sanctified Bible toters better acknowledge. Everywhere that I ride in town crosses paths with old timey buddies or at least long ago memories such as when passing Beulah Womack Hale's old dwelling on Hazel Street. Even though she died in her new house on Blanton Street in Heverely Addition. Just catty-cornored on Hazel lived another set of good friends, the Bragg family as he worked for the railroad too. His wife and he moved from Bonham, Texas to Texarkana in mid thirties and bought their ~~two~~ big house with 22 foot ceilings on the street with a trolly car system. His wife was always called Bragg for that was her longsuit at all the domino and 42 tournaments held at her place when my wife won against the school principal B. B. Lawson and sometimes superintendent and junior college president H. W. Stillwell. My wife won hands down against those math chizes with their college degrees but they were good sports and she lost a lot of times but not by much on the score pad, no skunking on her for sure. Viz Bragg always delighted in declaring that her big home only cost eighteen hundred dollars and anything more was only paid by stupid horse-traders with no good sense, saying this till the year I died meaning that the world should have stopped at the 1935 price level of things. Even Bill DuFree claimed the same thing about my cardboard box home that cost twenty-six hundred dollars plus interest as being absurd so then the later newfangled houses built on a slab for ten times the cost of my house really shocked all the know-it-alls in this town; their smug remarks could not believe anyone would be an ignorant fool enough to buy such poorly constructed abodes, unless of course they wanted a place to live as I retorted since the whole world cannot forever live in the exact same number of buildings forever and ever since the population was growing by leaps and bounds unlimited. But logic never stopped the conservative mind-set from always believing the same things arregardless of the facts as truth was not their long suit either. The Bragg family had 4 children which was the prescribed number in the Bible to go forth, ~~replenish~~ replenish and multiply throughout the earth. Eldest daughter Marie Bragg Ward wed a moviescreen writer so they were celebrities in this town for decades when returning on visits. Youngest Alice Bragg Reagan had twins the first go-round and then 3 more births, to make 5. The business owning Reagan family had cash to flash and their daughter Cayle Reagan acted in plays and went to Dallas to study acting and had a stint in Hollywood. But only son Bill Bragg wed the baby daughter of co-worker of mine Sill Greenwood; Silve was a namesake for her dad Sill and nearly as good a Roman Catholic as her dad but the Baptist Braggs never gave in to any of the usual squabbles between the sects. Sill Greenwood had his own problems when his other daughter went blind just before her husband died of a tragedy; thus, the blind daughter had been ~~nurse~~ known as nurse Walker all over town; she had a huge two-story house and did not appear unsighted in the way she ran her home full of young children alone. The eldest of her brood drove the new Chrysler New Yorker she bought each year for transportation, a lovely tan automobile. ~~God~~ God takes care of those who help themselves, quoted the families often enough, during their relative get-togethers.

My relatives continued to visit me and my family a lot. Miss Lynna drove down and always brought food raised on the old homelace; she was generous to share her lot in life. She was a regal gal, and a tall drink of water if you get my drift. Now, that should get your goat for a while, if the cat ain't got your tongue yet. Lynna brought onions that I passed off as my own produce for I would dig holes and put them in the soil to claim as my own gardening expertise as competition against the good neighbors here. Frances LeGree was a good gardner and she did well being from Charleston, South Carolina herself and husband Greg. Frances had a deep South accent and hollered a lot so she shrieked when seeing me pull such a huge onion from my patch but I had forgotten in my haste to wash the black gumbo soil from the roots in my whittish sandy loan here. I would have told the truth eventually for my good sweetheart wife Miss Ella would not have allowed a lie to go unnoticed for long if at all. My excuse was of course that my long tongue got in front of my eye teeth so I couldn't say what I was seeing." I was gone six ways from Sunday school declared my good wife ever and anon about this prank, however droll she ~~tried~~ tried to act about my fun times on neighbors and was a scene not to be repeated in a hurry, she urged.

Taylor 161/161

All my who-raw-hiding fun was done to forget all the ills of life such as the mafia murders that kept happening. And then the biggest car theft ring in the whole United States was headquartered here out of Acme Salvage Yard that the influential owner did not know of course. And his lawyer son got him off scott-free as was expected since he was a big churchgoer of a fine conservative family. And to this day a chop shop still exists even though the police are bought off to say that nothing like that exists anymore from the "Little Chicago" days of lore. Even the mafia is said not to exist either so that shows what they don't know and how little real protection one can get from the ignorance or just right-out being bought off of such a poor excuse for a police force. But the status quo must be maintained for the old time thievery to continue while being swept under the carpet like always or for old times sake (that is why conservatives like to keep things unchanged for their rackets earn regular dough to keep them looking richer than the everyday hard-working citizens). I thus just keep switching boxcars everyday now that I have a full time job out of the gun fire of the bullets from the underworld wiseguys or mafia dons. I could enforce honesty with one arm tied behind my back by just talking a good story and quoting the Bible like all the evildoers do all the time (they talk about their favorite sins being done by someone else far away and the talk is all that is done about the meanness going on in town all the time). Must not do anything to change the old guard style of letting crime abound since God made the world the way it is and just who are we to dare change God's creation? I ask not for myself but for the welfare of the young yet to grow up in this den of iniquity. All this evil really makes my town an exciting place to live, never a dull moment. The local yokels know all the low-down well enough but will not tell strangers what to avoid since their sense of ethics allows not telling the truth at all (and this is what good Christian folks do in the name of God to perpetuate evil). So what can you expect from the otherwise evil folks? But the anti-christ does not come from alien world of evil but rather resides in the leadership of the Christian Church so the Arab Muslim is not the foreign enemy to fear as from within does one's institutions fall. I could run this town and be popular if I feigned ignorance when something bad happens, in this let us pretend world of games. Even valuable things disappear from the police prop room here and the police themselves should be charged but too much gross ignorance exists to find the root cause as good old boy B. W. Fant informs us all. We have a crime wave all the time by the very people hired to protect us. And one-car accidents are also the way the underworld gets rid of pesky citizens who question such double dealings so I could come up missing or ~~xxx/xx~~ wake up dead like that if I became a good citizen.

I appear normal like all the others here, to wake up in a new world each day. I have no clout to get legal changes needed but the polite society power structure indeed talk about all the illegalities. And that gossipy clap-trap makes the naysayers feel good or superior to the really bad culprits for some small token of a reason. Dining out is the really big social thing to do, to be seen in public is a big event. I though don't eat out much; the food just ain't that good to pay good money for not much of anything. The soup is like dishwater by home standards so why pay for inferior stuff or throw away money. And that's the yin yang of it all for me. Will take a month of Sundays to get me to eat out, begging for days on end before I give in. As I said the food is enough to turn a cast-iron stomach like mine that is just as fool proof on the other side for sure. And some of the queazy looking food is foul smelling concoctions for sure. But eating out gives a change to look others over and criticize their wardrobe and then get reminded about all their secret sins for you to relate in baited breath to others near you. A real gab session can dig up the most rotten bones of contention about the community leaders. All unadulterated gossip has an element of trust for sure to be believed so that the saying where there is smoke there is fire can be true. Like saying that the Chinese cooks kill stray cats for their main dishes or one can get hepatitis from seafood caught in polluted waters or eaten in months when letters in word oyster do not appear. The common folk conventional wisdom controls the lifestyle here and seems unending.

The endless frost of familiarity is typical or warmth of love not in them best describes the peddlers of the local wisdom from the common man in town. I should know as I am about as common as they come. I ain't no better or no worse than them so don't get me wrong about all my idle chatter on these low-down subjects.

Chatting with my friends keeps my jaws sore for sure, just keeping ahead of them on the newsy lingo. I know so much that I can't get it out of my mouth fast enough. Must talk out of both sides of my mouth at once like the politicians do. Riding the bus on the old trolley rail line route gives a good chance to keep in good jawboning practice. Hazel Street was one of the best routes and the Sill Greenwood lived just five blocks north of the Bragg home and then Pearl Helms DuFree lived another five blocks north on Hazel so all my talky friends bunched together like always. Miss Pearl was once my first grade school teacher in Commerce in old Professor Day's Elementary institution and then she married the brother to Pink DuFree who stole watermelons and roasting ears from farmers and sold them in farmers's markets at nearby towns; everybody knew his sleazy ways and he was never arrested. Folks just turned their head the other way when he came about since they needed to someone to feel superior to and to gossip against. Why if Pink DuFree had cleaned up his act, nothing much exciting would exist to gossip about all the time from Texarkana to Commerce town. Bad folks bring a lot of good joy to the peddling of tales in an otherwise dull gossip session. I like old timey ways and things for that very reason not to let things really change. I fast moving jaws are kept in practice from chewing gum which I make at home since a kid. Sun flower rosin that is white on the stem but not the yellow rosin and then mix white with stretch berries to make a bubble; it is a magenta color (yellow rosin makes mouth sore). And that is how I had gum during the war ration years of WW II for my kids. This usta to be the way all kids made their homemade gum of days of yore; this skill did not impinge in no way on the economy of the land as gum was once not manufactured till busybody rich boys packaged the formula and spoiled the children so badly that the ancient art got lost among all the soft living conditions of the greenhouse generations born in this twentieth century machine age easy times. Pink DuFree was a barrel of monkeys fun to be around, so much so, that you forget his ugly mug or face not so fare; he was ugly all his life so what could you expect of his adult years and his children. But then who am I to call the pot black for sure. Bill Dupree died one day after tending his garden spot at home so they had the funeral at home, there on 3023 Hazel Street. Home funerals are not much in vogue anymore and the procession had to travel all the way to Josephine, Texas where the Helms family plot got him planted for eternity. We went along for the ride, to see the countryside again and back. Miss Pearl went back to teaching school since a big shortage still existed and she was already rich in hundreds of acres of blackland cotton farms around Josephine near Royse City out from Dallas but she wanted something to do. And teaching gave her pocket change. Her only daughter Daphna Dell had married a Dutton who owned the Frigidaire dealership in Greenville so they were all in high cotton for sure. *Handwritten: (a really cozy #4 gun & bag)* This gave Pearl the freedom to be on her own. But Miss Pearl was a prude, scared of getting a disease from even drinking out of a fountain that could give you something sope and water can't wash off. She preached the Bible quote that cleanliness is next to Godliness for all it was worth. And then the sudden availability of pencillin astonished Miss Pearl and all of us highly moral souls. Morals sure changed for the worse when that pencillin became easy to get prescribed for all kinds of infections; doctors want and need the money so they give prescriptions easily to cure all kin's of rashes. But the wide-spread use of pencillin made sex no longer a dreaded things to get syphilis or gonahrea so sleeping around became and obvious practice that was not a big deal anymore to be celibant or faithful. A sexual revolution began in earners. Morals just got thrown out the window so to speak. I could not believe my ears about all the obvious promiscuity or eyes either. And I would not pull your leg about this either. Over-grown kids got into the sex-revolution act; they want to be like the adults soon as they can and they already drank like the men as it was (boys want to be big shot men soon enough so they mimick the grown-ups soon as they can and do what is shown by example to them rather than the high-toned false words of the Publican acting church-goers). I thus was never anything but a good example of whatever that I did say was right. I always drank my poison on the QT, never guzzled in public. No one ever saw me falling down drunk on the streets or never did I fall from grace once being baptized/~~and~~ to become a born-again Christian; I never again intentionally did those same wrongs again like the good book commanded to go henceforth and do those things never more. Self respect is the first order of the day so it is better to get dog-drunk at home so you can go to bed like I did and then sleep it off in private not in the gutter where all can see.

Drunkendness and casual sex meetings are a weakness to spread all kinds of diseases. Bad enough to get canker sores yourself but to spread all that soreness is not nice. One can just get germs from sitting in a public bathroom commode or so I was always taught but now one group of scientists say naught while another groupie declare yes. Who is to be believed so now the pencillian shots make the discussion moot for the youngsters out to have a high old good time. But Oh that I have the courage of my convictions from olden times not to become modern and thus immoral. Then, all this new-fangled doctors say germs can't live but a few seconds on counters so no need to worry about contract~~ing~~ a malady in public, Folks really like to hear all that silly crap so they can hinge their simple minded reasoning on exactly the one little bit of controversey proclaimed as absolute truth for them to be filthy or nasty minded culprits. Even wearing a hair net in restaurants by the waitresses has become passe. Hairs in the food or on the plate almost became a fetish to count on the side of the main course; that is enough to turn my cast iron stomach over to its alluminum coated side. I no longer frequent public place to eat out for fear of getting the crud of the century inside me even though new-wave of doctors said all diseases were cured by the medical science shot in the butt. So much for the posteria of mankind. But kissing disease or mono takes its toll on the teenagers who think nothing bad can happen to them; cleanness is next to Godliness so I find myself a good workbrittle Christian to keep company with. All the conflag that God cured the plagues of society doesn't convince me to act licentious. All the sanctified hollering and waving of arms to heavenward redemption won't salve the wounds of pardition when doing wrong, no matter the conflation reading of the Bible texts will change the truth so all those Bible toting sinners can be so nice seeming till you really get to know them. Just would not want to have down home fun with them or spend old homeweek in their self-elevated company.

Down home fun is best with the family. Birthday and Christmas always seem a good time to be blessed with the relatives and they indeed bless us with their hellacious gifts that have no practical use such as ugly ties and bad hankerchiefs too thin to use or too dainty for words (whatever happened to a box full of old-fashioned cotton plain vanilla hankies to wipe the nose?). Those useless gifts rained down like crazy on me when the relatives gave them serious like, would have been better as a practical joke which they wuz seeminly. That's what got me bumfuzzled about the intent of the loving kin, for they poke thier bill in your personal business while presenting the hokey gift. Like that generosity gave them the right to invade your innermost private thoughts with editorial commentary. Enough to make you go to fist city. And then the departure from the dinner feast was not done proper unless all the kin cried loudly that the next time we see one of use here today would be at the funeral parlour for sure. Writhing in agony to show misery at such a thought was deeply expected for sure. Crockidile tears were easier for some to shed than others of us. The louder and longer the wailing, the more love was shown in this emotican shattering escapeade.

These emotional outbursts or storms happen all the time or at least often enough as the old saying goes. My favorite brother-in-law Horace Winniford died after a long bout with a death-bed illness. As I have always said funerals are for the living and indeed what a living the undertakers made from my kin. Poor Horace had a tumor on his lower spine that pressed a nerve to make him go into fits so he was considered to be ~~insane~~ ^{Winniford} consigned to an insane asylum at Terrell. There, they found the growth was the root cause, not a mental problem at all so the family kept the whole thing under the hat and that is enough to scare the living daylights out of you when it is these normal acting folks who clasp and rub their hands in a rolling writhing of nervousness when relating how desperately ill a relative is (they want everyone to share immediately the painful anguish of the moment). Pitiful Horace died before he had to witness much of this grieving over his terminal condition. The big funeral wake brought food from the whole county plus his daughter Dovie Lee Winniford knew the national singer J. T. Adams from college days whose songs GOD IS REAL was a number one hit parade so the countryside showed to hear and to see the famous songster. We had to hand carry the casket to the church for blocks from the hearse or so it seemed because of the crowds in the streets. I wore a suit not fit for a dog fight even. Family squabbles broke out into factions about all the old fits of temper from causes long swept under the rug or from buried hatchets with the handle of contention waiting for just the right moment to argue again. We had